The Bible Unpacked

18. God's Transformation of His People

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible’s teaching compiled for established believers

Paul Mallison
The Bible Unpacked™

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible’s teaching compiled for established believers

18. God’s Transformation of His People

Paul Mallison
The work of Paul Mallison in *The Bible Unpacked* is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. The Scripture translations used are not licensed under a Creative Commons license and have all rights reserved (cf. copyright notices below).

The material may be freely reproduced and distributed for non-commercial purposes. Permission must be obtained from the copyright owners of the Scripture translations before the material may be used commercially or freely distributed with changes to how verses of Scripture are used.


Scripture quotations marked “ESV” are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.


Scripture quotations marked “GW” are taken from *God’s Word®* Copyright 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “ISV” are taken from the *Holy Bible: International Standard Version®*, Release 1.44. Copyright © 1996–2007 by The ISV Foundation of Fullerton, California USA. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. All rights reserved internationally.

Scripture quotations marked “NCV™” are taken from the *New Century Version®*. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations designated “NET” are from the *NET Bible®* copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. http://www.bible.org/ All rights reserved. Scripture quoted by permission.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from *The New King James Version®*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers., Copyright © 1982. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations of short phrases from other Bible translations are on occasions included in comments on the verses. The copyright notices for these translations are given below.


Scripture quotations marked “NLT” are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NRSV” are from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright © 1989 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This copy made: 23-Dec-20.
Contents

A Quick Word ........................................................................................................ iv
Suggestions for Study Groups ........................................................................ v

I. General
   a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive .............................................. 2
   b) God Makes His People Holy .................................................................. 5
   c) God Teaches His People ......................................................................... 8
   d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons ........................................... 11
   e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights ........................................... 14

II. Spiritual Attributes
   a) Love, Faith and Hope ......................................................................... 18
   b) Peace ................................................................................................. 21
   c) Joy ..................................................................................................... 24
   d) Wisdom and Knowledge ..................................................................... 27

Topics in This Series ...................................................................................... 31
The Seven Editions ......................................................................................... 33
Persecuted Christians ................................................................................... 34
A Quick Word

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Users are asked to pray regularly for persecuted Christians** and, if possible, support them financially. These things can be done through organizations that provide aid to them and/or prayer notices, such as those listed under Persecuted Christians.

Paul Mallison
Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

• Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.

• Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse’s context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.

• Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

• Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.

• Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments. Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

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

• What is something that you either: did not know before; gained greater insight into; or needed reminding of?

• What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?

• In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
  (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?
If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?
I. General

God transforms his people by giving them the invaluable gift of spiritual life, in which they are “reborn” in a spiritual sense. Additionally, God makes them holy and accordingly begins to transform them to be like Jesus Christ and himself. God does this through such things as teaching and disciplining them.
a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

God’s people have spiritual life

**John 6:63** [Jesus, to his followers:] *The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help! The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

Jesus’ words together with the Holy Spirit bring life. This spiritual life involves being “alive to God” (Romans 6:11) and comes through having God’s Holy Spirit. Each believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, renewing and nourishing them spiritually. Consequently believers have a spiritual consciousness that enables them to live in communion with and in dependence on God. As such they are “alive to God”.

One could make a parallel with a person’s own spirit enabling them to have physical life (for without one’s spirit indwelling one’s physical body, the body is dead). Somewhat similarly, having the Holy Spirit enables a person to have spiritual life.

They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life

**1 John 3:14** [John, to believers:] *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have “died” and they are now spiritually alive

**Rom 6:6–8, 11** [Paul, to believers:] *We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ... 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

In our union with Jesus Christ we are identified with him in his death and resurrection. In a spiritual sense our old sinful selves have died with him in his death and we have been made alive spiritually with him in his post-resurrection life.
God’s people are spiritually reborn of God . . .

**John 1:12–13** But to all who have received him [Jesus] – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God’s children: children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God. **NET**

References to being born by God (v. 13) – or born again – refer to the spiritual rebirth people undergo when they come to faith, and by which they have spiritual life. It is accomplished by God through the work of the Holy Spirit within a person’s heart or mind, along with exposure to God’s word. This spiritual birth means that believers are in a real sense children of God. It also begins a process of growing more like God, as believers share in his Spirit which transforms them.

. . . They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God’s word

**John 3:6–7** [Jesus:] A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit. 7 Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again. **GNT**

**James 1:18** [James, to believers:] By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. **NET**

God’s people are a new creation

**2Cor 5:17** So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away – look, what is new has come! **NET**

Explain the spiritual “life” that the New Testament speaks of, as if you were talking to a new believer.

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
How is this life given to Christians?

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

In what ways are Christians a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)? What old things have gone?

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
b) God Makes His People Holy

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit makes God’s people holy*, Ch. 17

The concept of being made holy concerns God’s people being set apart for God - dedicated to him, for such purposes as doing his work and worshiping him. This involves them being made pure from sin.

Being made holy has a couple of phases or facets. Firstly, when a person comes to faith their sins are forgiven, and as such they are holy. Secondly, believers are made holy in that they are continually being transformed by God, becoming more like Jesus Christ and increasingly devoid of sin. This process is often referred to as “sanctification”.

God makes his people holy . . .

**Ex 31:13**  [God, to Moses:] Tell the Israelites, ‘Surely you must keep my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.  

**1Thes 5:23–24**  [Paul, to believers:] Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  

. . . God’s people are a holy people

**1Cor 3:17**B  For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.  

God’s “temple” is the church.

God’s people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice

**Heb 13:12**  So Jesus also suffered outside the city to make his people holy with his own blood.
God’s people are being made like God . . .

**Col 3:9–10** [Paul, to the Colossian believers:] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. *ESV*

. . . God’s people are being transformed to be like Jesus Christ

**2Cor 3:18** [Paul, to believers:] *We all show the Lord’s glory, and we are being changed to be like him.* *NCV™*

Paul has the development of the believer’s sanctification in view, with their characters growing more like Christ. As such believers increasingly reflect and even manifest Christ’s glory.

**Note: God’s people are his workmanship**

**Eph 2:10** [Paul, to believers:] *For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus* for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them. *NET*

To what extent or in what sense are believers made “completely holy and ... entirely blameless” (1Thes 5:23)?

What changes are you seeing in yourself, compared to before you became a Christian? What are your “growing edges”?
What is one aspect of Jesus Christ’s character that you need to imitate better? How can you make yourself more open to God transforming you to be like Jesus Christ in this way?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
c) God Teaches His People

See also:

- The Holy Spirit teaches God’s people . . . , Ch. 17
- . . . The Holy Spirit teaches God’s people about all things, Ch. 17
- d) Wisdom and Knowledge, p. 27

God teaches his people

**John 6:45** [Jesus:] It is written in the prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. NCV™

**Phil 3:15** [Paul, to believers:] All of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, too. And if there are things you do not agree with, God will make them clear to you. NCV™

God teaches his people how to live

**Ps 25:9** He shows those who are humble how to do right, and he teaches them his ways. NCV™

**Ps 32:8** [God:] I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. ESV

God enables his people to know the truth

**John 8:31–32** Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, “If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” NET

God makes known things about himself to his people . . .

**Ps 103:7** He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. ESV

**Isa 43:10** The LORD says [to Israel], “You are my witnesses and the servant I chose. I chose you so you would know and believe me, so you would understand that I am the true God. There was no God before me, and there will be no God after me.” NCV™
and God makes known other things of his to his people

**Eph 1:17-19** [Paul, to believers:] *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him,* °**18**—since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened °**19**—so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, °**19**and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength.* Net

The fact that Paul prays that the Ephesians would know these things is indicative that he saw God as ultimately the source of such knowledge.

God reveals unknown and concealed things to his people

**Isa 48:6** [God, to his people:] *From this point on I am announcing to you new events that are previously unrevealed and you do not know about.* Net

**1Cor 2:9-10** [Paul, to believers:] *But just as it is written, “Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.” °**10**God has revealed these to us by the Spirit.* For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. Net

How does God teach his people?
What things would you like God to teach you more about?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

How can you make yourself more open to God teaching you?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons

When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .

Jer 30:14b  [God, to Israel:] I have attacked you like an enemy; your punishment has been harsh because your sins are many and your wickedness is great. GNT

Ps 39:11  [David, to God:] You correct and punish people for their sins ... NCV™

. . . By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again

Hos 5:14–15  [God:] I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear them to pieces, then I will carry them off, and no one will be able to rescue them! 15Then I will return again to my lair until they have suffered their punishment. Then they will seek me; in their distress they will earnestly seek me. NET

God disciplines his people to rid them of sin

Ps 119:67  [A psalmist, to God:] Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. ESV

God disciplines them to save them from sin’s consequences

1Cor 11:32  [Paul, to believers:] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world. NET

Isa 38:17  [Hezekiah, to God:] Look, the grief I experienced was for my benefit. You delivered me from the pit of oblivion. For you removed all my sins from your sight. NET

Here Hezekiah speaks of a time of intense suffering, which he attributes to God’s punishment or discipline for sin. His words point to the fact that those who respond appropriately to God’s discipline are forgiven for their sins and no longer face destruction.
However, hard times from God are not always due to sin

**Ps 44:14, 17, 22** [A Psalms, to God:] You have made us an object of contempt among the nations; they shake their heads at us in scorn. ... 17 All this has happened to us, even though we have not forgotten you or broken the covenant you made with us. ... 22 But it is on your account that we are being killed all the time, that we are treated like sheep to be slaughtered. 

Not only was the people’s suffering from God not due to sin, but it was because of their faithfulness to him that they were looked upon as objects suitable for abuse and even death (v. 22). This illustrates that discipline or suffering is not necessarily due to sin. Often the reason may in fact not be apparent.

God also tests his people to show if they will obey him

**Deut 8:2** [Moses, to the Israelites:] Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way these 40 years in the desert, to humble and test you in order to make known what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 

Further reasons why God disciplines and tests his people

**Heb 12:9–11** [The writer, to believers:] On earth we have fathers who disciplined us, and we respect them. Shouldn’t we place ourselves under the authority of God, the father of spirits, so that we will live? 10 For a short time our fathers disciplined us as they thought best. Yet, God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him. 11 We don’t enjoy being disciplined. It always seems to cause more pain than joy. But later on, those who learn from that discipline have peace that comes from doing what is right.

**James 1:2–3** [James, to believers:] My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
What are some reasons why God allows his people to experience difficult times? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Is all hardship in the lives of believers due to God’s discipline and testing? If not, how can we discern if particular hardship is or not?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Have you experienced any times of discipline or testing that you can look back on and say were “for my benefit” (Isa 38:17)?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights

God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves

**Heb 12:5–8** [The writer, to believers:] And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons? “My son, do not scorn the Lord’s discipline or give up when he corrects you. 6”For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts.” 7Endure your suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? 8But if you do not experience discipline, something all sons have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons. NET

God’s discipline is characterized by righteousness and faithfulness

**Neh 9:30–31, 33** [Levites, praying to God and making reference to their forefathers:] You prolonged your kindness with them for many years, and you solemnly admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. Still they paid no attention, so you delivered them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. 31However, due to your abundant mercy you did not do away with them altogether; you did not abandon them. For you are a merciful and compassionate God. ... 33You are righteous with regard to all that has happened to us, for you have acted faithfully. It is we who have been in the wrong! NET

As well as speaking of his patience and mercy, vv. 30–31 beautifully illustrate God’s righteousness and faithfulness in his discipline and dealings with his people, affirmed in v. 33.

God’s punishment of his people is warranted . . .

**Ezek 16:59** Jerusalem, you deserve to be punished, because you broke your promises and ignored our agreement. CEV

**Ezek 14:23** [God, to Ezekiel:] They will console you when you see their behavior and their deeds, because you will know that it was not without reason that I have done everything which I have done in it, declares the sovereign LORD. NET
God assured Ezekiel that when he saw the ungodliness of those who had remained in Jerusalem, he would realize that God had done nothing in his destruction of it without good reason.

... and God’s punishment is often less than what his people’s sins really deserve

**Ezra 9:13** [Ezra, to God:] After all that has happened to us because of our evil behavior, and because of our great sin—considering that you our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve and have given us this deliverance—... ISV

**God’s discipline is temporary...**

**Ps 30:5**  His anger lasts only a moment, but his kindness lasts for a lifetime. Crying may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning. NCV™

The reference to God’s anger speaks of his discipline and punishment.

... Due to his compassion, God limits his people’s punishment

**Neh 9:28**  [Levites, praying to God and making reference to their forefathers:] But after they had gained relief, they returned to doing evil before you. Therefore you abandoned them to the control of their enemies, who continued to oppress them. But when they came back and cried out to you, you listened from heaven and delivered them in your compassion on many occasions. ISV

**Lam 3:31–32**  [Jeremiah, reflecting on the plight of his people:] For the Lord will not reject us forever. 32 Though he causes us grief, he then has compassion on us according to the abundance of his loyal kindness. NET

**God’s discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through**

**Ps 66:10–12**  [A psalmist, to God:] You have put us to the test, God; as silver is purified by fire so you have tested us. 11 You let us fall into a trap and placed heavy burdens on our backs. 12 You let our enemies trample over us; we went through fire and flood, but now you have brought us to a place of safety. GNT
Explain how God’s discipline is connected with one of the following characteristics of God: love, righteousness and faithfulness.

Of what relevance is the teaching that God’s discipline/testing is temporary and that he brings his people through it, to people with chronic suffering? How is it applicable to them?

What is one point or verse in this or the previous section that you would find encouraging during times of discipline or testing?

Pray for persecuted Christians
II. Spiritual Attributes

The spiritual attributes that God bestows on his people far exceed anything that this world can offer. Attributes or blessings such as love, hope, joy, peace and wisdom are longed for by most people, and sought after in many ways. But it is only from God that they can be gained in their highest form.
a) Love, Faith and Hope

See also:
- *The Holy Spirit gives God’s people love and faith*, Ch. 17

Love, faith and hope form a key triad of spiritual graces or attributes. They are linked a number of times in the NT, most famously in 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

**God gives his people love . . .**

*Eph 6:23* [Paul, to believers:] Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *NET*

. . . God enables his people to love

*1 Thes 4:9* [Paul, to believers:] Now on the topic of brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. *NET*

**God gives his people faith**

*Rom 12:3b* [Paul, to the believers in Rome:] God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith. *NET*

**God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ**

*2 Thes 2:16a* [Paul, to believers:] God our Father loved us and by his kindness gave us everlasting encouragement and good hope. *GW*

*1 Pet 1:3–4* [Peter, to believers:] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah! Because of his great mercy he has given us a new birth to an ever-living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, from the dead 4 and to an inheritance kept in heaven for you that can’t be destroyed, corrupted, or changed. *ISV*

Through Jesus Christ’s resurrection, God has brought believers into an “ever-living hope” (v. 3). This encompasses the hope of their own resurrection and an everlasting inheritance in heaven (v. 4).
God’s promises give his people hope

**Heb 6:17–18** To those who were to receive what he promised, God wanted to make it very clear that he would never change his purpose; so he added his vow to the promise. **18** There are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie. So we who have found safety with him are greatly encouraged to hold firmly to the hope placed before us. **GNT**

This indicates that “the hope placed before us” (v. 18) by God is based on, or comes from, his promise that is referred to and his confirmation of it with an oath – the “two things... that cannot change” (v. 18).

God’s promises to his people include promises for the present life . . .

**Acts 2:38–39** Peter said to them, “Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” **NET**

**Ps 119:76, 116a** [A psalmist, to God:] May your loyal love console me, as you promised your servant. ... **116** Sustain me as you promised, so that I will live. **NET**

In these verses “as you promised” refers to promise of deliverance.

... and promises for the afterlife – notably the promise of eternal life

**2Pet 3:13** [Peter, to believers:] But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides. **NET**

**Titus 1:2** [Paul, speaking of believers:] Then they will have the hope of eternal life that God promised long ago. And God never tells a lie! **CEV**
Choose one of love, faith or hope - and say what is unique about the believer’s experience of it.

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

How or in what way/s does God teach believers to love one another (cf. 1Thes 4:9)?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What reason/s do we have to believe God’s promises?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
II. Spiritual Attributes

b) Peace

See also:
- The Holy Spirit gives God’s people joy and peace, Ch. 17

OT references to the peace that God gives to his people encompass both inner peace (including being at ease) and outer peace (the absence of war and adversity). In addition to peace with God, the NT speaks of God giving his people an inner, spiritual peace – even amidst adversity. The NT also speaks of God engendering peace or harmony amongst groups of believers.

God gives his people peace

Ps 29:11 The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace. NCV™

Col 1:2 [Paul:] To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ that live in Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. NCV™

God provides his people with rest

Ex 33:14 And the LORD said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” NET

Jesus Christ gives God’s people peace . . .

John 14:27 [Jesus, to his disciples:] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage. NET

John 16:33 [Jesus, to his disciples:] I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage – I have conquered the world. NET

Because Jesus Christ has overcome the world, in him believers have peace amidst the trouble that the world causes them.

. . . and Jesus Christ gives his people rest

Matt 11:28–30 [Jesus:] Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find
rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.  

Here “rest” appears to encompass (or at least be applicable to) rest from: trying to obey the OT law in order to be righteous before God, particularly with how it was embellished by the Jews; the burden of sin; and any troubles in our lives that weary and burden us.

**God’s people have great peace**

**ISA 26:3** The LORD gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm.  

**PHIL 4:6–7** [Paul, to believers:] Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  

**2THES 3:16** [Paul, to believers:] Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all.  

Note that this is primarily speaking of peace amongst believers.

**God’s people have peace and rest even in death**

**ISA 57:2** Those who live good lives find peace and rest in death.  

**Note: God is the God of peace**

**ROM 15:33** [Paul, to believers:] Now may the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

What does Jesus mean by saying: “I do not give it [peace] to you as the world does” (John 14:27)?
In reference to Philippians 4:6–7 (in *It is a great peace*), how does what Paul says to do in v. 6 lead to the peace spoken of in v. 7?

Choose one verse or passage in this section that encourages you, and say why.
c) Joy

See also:
- *The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace*, Ch. 17

**God gives joy to his people**

_Ps 97:11_ Light is sown for the righteous, and *joy for the upright in heart*. ESV

**God and Jesus Christ give their people fullness of joy**

_Rom 15:13_ [Paul, to believers:] Now *may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit_. NET

_John 15:10–11_ [Jesus, to his disciples:] If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete_. NET

**The joy is present even in trouble**

_Ps 94:19_ [A psalmist, to God:] _When my anxious inner thoughts become overwhelming, your comfort makes me glad_. ISV

_2Cor 8:2_ They [churches in Macedonia] _have been severely tested by the troubles they went through; but their joy was so great_ that they were extremely generous in their giving, even though they are very poor. GNT

**Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy**

_Isa 35:10_ And the ransomed of the _LORD_ shall return and come to Zion with singing; _everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away_. ESV

_Jer 31:11–13_ For the _LORD_ will rescue the descendants of Jacob. He will secure their release from those who had overpowered them. "They will come and shout for joy on Mount Zion. They will be radiant with joy over the good things the _LORD_ provides, the grain, the fresh wine, the olive oil, the young sheep and calves he has given
to them. They will be like a well-watered garden and will not grow faint or weary any more. The LORD says, “At that time young women will dance and be glad. Young men and old men will rejoice. I will turn their grief into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy in place of their sorrow.” NET

**Note: God’s joy strengthens people**

**NEH 8:10** He [Nehemiah] said to them, “Go and eat delicacies and drink sweet drinks and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” NET

The grief of the people would be offset through them drawing strength from the joy they had in the LORD, or the “joy that the LORD gives” (GNT, cf. CEV).

How can believers have joy even in the midst of trouble?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Explain the connection between joy and strength.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
To what degree do you experience the joy which comes from God? What should one do to know more of this joy?

Pray for persecuted Christians
d) Wisdom and Knowledge

See also:

- Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge, Ch. 17
- c) God Teaches His People, p. 8

Note that in the Bible “knowledge” generally refers to spiritual knowledge, indicative of a clear comprehension of things of God. This is particularly so in the NT.

God gives his people wisdom

James 1:5  But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.  NET

James 3:17  But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peacable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical.  NET

God gives his people knowledge

Eccl 2:26  God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to anyone who pleases him.  GW

Matt 13:11  He [Jesus] answered them, “You have been given knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but it hasn’t been given to them.  ISV

Jesus revealed God’s hidden teachings of the kingdom of heaven to his disciples but not to others in the crowds. Presumably this was in part at least because the others were not open to believing and/or were not prepared to intently seek the truth.

God’s people are given spiritual sight . . .

Eph 1:17–19  [Paul, to believers:] I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him, 18– since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened – so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the incomparable greatness of his power
toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength. NET

Ps 119:18  [A psalmist, to God:] Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in your law! NET

As suggested by the psalmist’s request, God opens his people’s eyes to spiritual truth.

. . . They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness

1Pet 2:9  [Peter, to believers:] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one [God] who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. NET

John 8:12  Then Jesus spoke out again, “I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” NET

The light that Jesus gives enables one to recognize and avoid “darkness” or falsehood – including false ideologies and ways of life – and shows the way to spiritual life.

Note: The exceptional wisdom that God gave to Solomon

1Ki 4:29–31  God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment; the breadth of his understanding was as infinite as the sand on the seashore. 30Solomon was wiser than all the men of the east and all the sages of Egypt. 31He was wiser than any man, including Ethan the Ezrahite or Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. He was famous in all the neighboring nations. NET
Choose one of the characteristics of wisdom listed in James 3:17 (in God gives his people wisdom) and give one reason why it is associated with wisdom.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What wisdom and knowledge does a Christian have that others do not have?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Do Christians themselves need to do anything for God to give them wisdom and knowledge?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
Notes
18. God’s Transformation of His People

Topics in This Series

Section I. What to Know

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

1. God’s Being
   I. Basics
   II. God’s Pre-Eminence

2. God’s Character
   I. Holy Characteristics
   II. Loving Characteristics

3. Jesus Christ
   I. General
   II. Jesus Christ and God

4. The Holy Spirit
   I. General
   II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

5. Angels, Satan and Demons
   I. Angels
   II. Satan and Demons

Part B. God and the World: Basics

6. God’s Creation
   I. General
   II. God’s Creation of People

7. God’s Sovereignty
   I. God’s Supreme Authority
   II. God’s Control over the World

8. God’s Word
   I. General
   II. Key Old Testament Covenants

9. The Problem of Sin
   I. General
   II. The Law’s Provision for Israel’s Sin

10. God’s Judgment
    I. Basics
    II. The Manifestation of God’s Judgment

Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. God’s Promised Messiah
    I. The Messiah’s Identity
    II. The Messiah’s Purpose and Person

12. Jesus Christ’s Mission
    I. God’s Enablement of Jesus Christ
    II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

13. Salvation through Jesus Christ
    I. Salvation from Sin
    II. Salvation for the World

14. The New Order
    I. Jesus Christ and the Law’s Diminished Role
    II. Key Elements of the New Order

15. ‘The Last Things’
    I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Final Judgment
    II. The Afterlife

Part D. God and His Own People

16. The Standing of God’s People
    I. Basics
    II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ

17. Keys to God’s Interaction
    I. Basics
    II. God’s Holy Spirit in His People

18. God’s Transformation of His People
    I. General
    II. Spiritual Attributes

19. God’s Care of His People
    I. God’s Saving of His People
    II. God’s Preservation of His People

20. God’s Plans for His People
    I. General
    II. God’s Plans for Israel
Section II. What to Do

**Part E. Relating to God**

21. **Being Right with God**  
   I. Getting Right with God  
   II. Staying Right with God  

22. **Having Faith in God**  
   I. Faith and Hope  
   II. What Not to Do  

23. **Loving, Fearing and Obeying God**  
   I. Loving and Fearing God  
   II. Obeying God  

24. **Connecting with God**  
   I. Being Close to God  
   II. Praying to God  

25. **Exalting God**  
   I. Instructions  
   II. Reasons to Exalt God  

**Part F. Church Life**

26. **Being One Body**  
   I. General  
   II. Caring for the Body  

27. **Worshiping God**  
   I. General  
   II. Offerings  

28. **Serving God**  
   I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights  
   II. Doing God’s Work  

29. **Significant Practices**  
   I. Symbolic Rites  
   II. Other Significant Practices  

30. **Church Leadership**  
   I. General  
   II. Teaching in the Church  

**Part G. Relating to People**

31. **Love**  
   I. Loving Qualities  
   II. Antitheses of Love  

32. **Justice**  
   I. Justice in Action  
   II. Being True  

33. **Wisdom**  
   I. Being Wise  
   II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge  

34. **Common Relationships**  
   I. Family Relationships  
   II. Civil Relationships  

35. **Spreading the Gospel**  
   I. Instructions  
   II. Insights  

**Part H. Persevering**

36. **Standing Firm**  
   I. General  
   II. Spiritual Warfare  

37. **Rejecting Sin**  
   I. Encountering Sin  
   II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy  

38. **Major Pitfalls**  
   I. Pride  
   II. Riches and Sex  

39. **Hard Times**  
   I. General  
   II. Praying in Hard Times  

40. **Persecution**  
   I. The Persecution of God’s People  
   II. What to Do in Persecution
The Seven Editions

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next one. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text and questions added. For more details and free downloads, go to [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

**Two-Minute Edition** – *Key Bible teachings for everyone.* For giving to non-Christians.

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

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

**Foundations Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching condensed for young believers.* For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.

**Intermediate Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching summarized for growing believers.* For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.

**Comprehensive Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching compiled for established believers.* For a more comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.

**In-Depth Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching expounded for Bible students.* For pastors, church leaders, Bible students and all who want a deep understanding of the faith. Available in a single pdf file with some 100,000 hyperlinks.
Persecuted Christians

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

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

**Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)
It provides material and spiritual support based on locally identified needs.

**Christian Solidarity International** – [csi-usa.org](http://csi-usa.org)
CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

**Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)
It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

**Open Doors** – [www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)
It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

**Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc)
RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org).

**Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin** – [rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com](http://rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com)
This site provides weekly prayer bulletins.

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and provides training.

**Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)
VOM helps persecuted Christians spread the gospel. It also gives material aid.

**World Watch Monitor** – [www.worldwatchmonitor.org](http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org)
It reports the story of Christians under pressure for their faith.

*Then the King will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.’*  Matthew 25:40 NCV
This series of studies is based on the *Comprehensive Edition of The Bible Unpacked*.

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*. These aim to address the needs of non-Christian through to mature Christian, from teenagers to adults.

For more information and free downloads go to: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)