

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

Paul Mallison

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The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

21. Being Right with God

Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

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

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](#).

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. Getting Right with God

See also:

- *Baptism*, Ch. 29
- *Confession of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 29

The Bible does not simply repeat one basic formula as to how to get "right with God". However there are two prominent themes, which basically encompass the other things that the Bible mentions. These two fundamental themes are repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.

Bear in mind that in using the expression "right with God", this chapter largely has in view being deemed righteous in God's eyes, which involves the forgiveness of one's sins. As such, it also means that we are at peace with God.

a) God's Invitation

God invites all people to come to him and be saved . . .

ISA 45:22 [GOD:] *Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!* For I am God, and there is no other. ESV

. . . For God wants all people to be saved

1TIM 2:3–4 This is good and it pleases *God our Saviour*, ⁴*who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.* GNT

God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him

ACTS 17:26–27 [PAUL, PREACHING TO THE ATHENIANS:] God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world. God decided exactly when and where they must live. ²⁷*God wanted them to look for him and perhaps search all around for him and find him*, though he is not far from any of us: ... NCV™

DEUT 4:29 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *If from there you will seek the LORD your God, then you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and soul.* ISV

The reference is actually to God's people seeking him again after being unfaithful, but it is also applicable to people initially seeking him.

We must believe in God and what he says

HEB 11:6 Now *without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* NET

JOHN 5:24 [JESUS:] I tell you the solemn truth, *the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me* has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life. NET

Jesus' words were from God, who sent him. It is critical that we believe God's words.

We must be open to believing and responding to God

MATT 18:2–4 He [Jesus] called a child, had him stand among them, ³and said [to his disciples], “I tell you the truth, *unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!* ⁴Whoever then humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. NET

Similarly in Mark 10:15 Jesus says, “...whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” These verses refer to the humility, openness and receptiveness of little children. These characteristics are required to believe and respond to Jesus’ message – and so enter God’s kingdom.

Now is the time to seek God and to respond to him

ISA 55:6 *Seek the LORD while he may be found. Call on him while he is near.* GW

2COR 6:2 [PAUL:] *God says, “At the right time I heard your prayers. On the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you that the “right time” is now, and the “day of salvation” is now.* NCV™

To underline the urgent need to respond to God’s salvation – or to secure it (cf. v. 1) – Paul cites Isaiah 49:8, applying it to the present time.

What things should one do in order to seek God?

What reasons do you have to believe in God?

Why do we need to become like little children to enter God's kingdom (cf. Matt 18:2-4)?

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Repentance

The words in the Bible that are translated as “repent” speak of: changing one’s mind, regret and consequently turning around. When people are called to repent, they are called to change their mindset and turn away from sin to God.

We must repent

ACTS 17:30 Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, *he now commands all people everywhere to repent, ...* NET

Confess your sins . . .

1JN 1:9 But if *we confess our sins*, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. NET

. . . and turn from sinful ways

JOHN 8:11 She [a woman caught committing adultery] replied, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go, and *from now on do not sin any more.*” NET

In turning from sin, do what is right . . .

PS 34:14 *Turn away from evil and do what is right!* Strive for peace and promote it! NET

. . . and turn to God

ACTS 20:21 [PAUL:] To Jews and Gentiles alike I gave solemn warning that they should *turn from their sins to God* and believe in our Lord Jesus. GNT

Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins

ACTS 3:19 Therefore *repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, ...* NET

Repentance leads to life

ACTS 11:18B “So then, God has granted the *repentance that leads to life* even to the Gentiles.” NET

Not repenting will result in judgment

ROM 2:5 [PAUL, TO ANY UNREPENTANT READERS:] *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed!* NET

Explain in your own words what is meant by "repent".

What is involved in confessing our sins?

What does turning to God involve?

c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General

See also:

- a) *Confession of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 29

Believe in Jesus Christ

JOHN 6:29 Jesus replied, “This is the deed God requires – to *believe in the one whom he sent.*” NET

Believing in Jesus Christ involves believing what the Bible says about: who he is; what he taught and did; his death and resurrection; and the results of his death and resurrection. Regarding the results of his death and resurrection, we are to believe that as a result of his death and resurrection Jesus Christ provides the things discussed below in *Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes.*

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

See also:

- 11. *God’s Promised Messiah*

JOHN 11:27B [MARTHA, TO JESUS:] Martha said to him, “Yes, Lord, *I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who was expected to come into the world.*” GW

“Christ” and “Messiah” are Greek and Hebrew terms respectively, meaning the “anointed” or the “Anointed One”. The OT tells of a coming anointed one of God, and on occasions speaks of him as God’s Son (cf. 2Sam 7:11b–14a; Ps 2:6–7; Ps 89:27).

Further key things to know and believe about Jesus Christ

JOHN 4:42 They said to the woman, “No longer do we believe because of your words, for we have heard for ourselves, and *we know that this one really is the Savior of the world.*” NET

ROM 10:9 *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved.* NCV™

The confession “Jesus is Lord” indicates that one believes Jesus is Lord over all creation.

One's response to Jesus Christ is one's response to God, who sent him

JOHN 13:20 I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and *whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.* NET

LUKE 10:16 “The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and *the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me.*” NET

Superficial belief is not enough . . .

LUKE 8:13 [JESUS, EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF A PARABLE:] Those on the rock are the *ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in a time of testing fall away.* NET

Such belief is superficial rather than deep-rooted. It is not entrenched in one's thoughts, persistently influencing one's behaviour. Moreover, it does not last.

. . . We are to both believe and repent

ACTS 20:21 To Jews and Gentiles alike *I gave solemn warning that they should turn from their sins to God and believe in our Lord Jesus.* GNT

What does believing in Jesus Christ involve?

How are belief in Jesus Christ and repentance related?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Reasons to Believe

Jesus Christ's words and knowledge

JOHN 4:41 *And many more believed because of the things he said.*
NCV™

JOHN 16:30 *Now we know that you know everything and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God.* NET

The clause “do not need anyone to question you” may be meaning that Jesus had the capacity to answer a person’s question even before it was asked (cf. NCV).

Jesus Christ's deeds

JOHN 2:23 *Now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, many people believed in his name because they saw the miraculous signs he was doing.* NET

Jesus Christ's death and resurrection

MATT 27:50–52, 54 *Then Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. ⁵¹Just then the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks were split apart. ⁵²And tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had died were raised. ... ⁵⁴Now when the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were extremely terrified and said, “Truly this one was God’s Son!”* NET

JOHN 13:19 [JESUS:] *I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am he.* NET

It appears that “before it happens” refers to Jesus’ death – with the preceding events, including his betrayal (cf. v. 18) – and to his subsequent resurrection. In addition to the importance of his death and resurrection themselves in showing who Jesus was, the fact that he predicted them also proved his claims. The phrase “I am he” is probably meaning that he is the Messiah, the one for whom the Jews were waiting.

Testimonies about Jesus Christ . . .

JOHN 4:39 *Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the report of the woman who testified, “He told me everything I ever did.”* NET

. . . God himself testified to Jesus and his claims

MATT 3:16–17 After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, *the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him.* ¹⁷*And a voice from heaven said, “This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.”* NET

As well as God’s voice (v. 17), the Holy Spirit’s descent on Jesus “like a dove” (Luke 3:22) was effectively a testimony from God, being apparent not only to Jesus but also to John (cf. John 1:32) and so presumably also to others present.

What reasons could you give a non-Christian to believe in Jesus Christ? (Do not limit your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

What reasons do we have to believe the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ life and work?

e) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes

Note that in conjunction with the following things being outcomes of believing in Jesus Christ, we are to believe in Jesus Christ for these things being granted to us, believing that he has made them possible by what he did.

We are forgiven of our sins

ACTS 10:43 About him [Jesus] all the prophets testify, that *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* NET

We are to believe in Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness of our sins. As such we are to believe Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of forgiveness – and trust in him for the forgiveness of our own sins.

We are granted righteousness and justified before God

ROM 3:21–22A But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²*the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* ESV

ROM 10:10 For *with the heart one believes and is justified*, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ESV

We are saved

ACTS 16:30B–31 [A JAILER, TO PAUL AND SILAS:] “Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*” ³¹*They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”* NET

ROM 10:9 *If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved.* GNT

We have eternal life

JOHN 3:16 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* NET

We become a child of God

JOHN 1:12–13 But to all who did accept him [Jesus] and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They did not become his children in any human way—by any human parents or human desire. *They were born of God.* NCV™

When we are “born of God” we are made alive spiritually, and begin a process of growing into God’s likeness.

We are given God’s Holy Spirit

JOHN 7:38–39 [JESUS:] *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’* ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. ESV

Note: Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned and do not have life

JOHN 3:18, 36 The one who believes in him is not condemned. *The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. ...* ³⁶The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. *The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God’s wrath remains on him.* NET

Why does believing in Jesus Christ result in being deemed righteous by God?

What does being a child of God mean to you?

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Reasons for Assurance

The verses in this section give reasons for assurance of things such as being saved and being in a close relationship with God – and as a consequence give assurance of being made right with God. Reasons for assurance of such things can also be found in the other sections of this chapter (particularly in *Repentance* and *Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Outcomes*) and in a number of parts of other chapters in this book.

God's word

1JN 5:13 [JOHN:] *I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.* NET

John speaks of things he wrote to assure his readers that they had eternal life. His writings are part of God's word, and accepting them – as with other things in God's word – brings great assurance.

Jesus Christ's death and his ministry in his risen life

HEB 10:19–22 [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Therefore, my brothers, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹and since we have a great high priest over the household of God, ²²let us continue to come near with sincere hearts in the full assurance that faith provides, because our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies have been washed with pure water.* ISV

The "sanctuary" (v. 19) speaks of God's presence. The phrase "our hearts have been sprinkled" (v. 22) alludes to the sprinkling of blood to ceremonially cleanse under the old covenant; in parallel Jesus Christ's blood has in a sense "sprinkled" our hearts to cleanse us. A key aspect of his role as our priest (v. 21) is that "he always lives to intercede" (7:25) for us before God. Being cleansed as such by Christ's death and having him as our priest – coupled with faith about the reality of these things – gives great assurance of being accepted into God's presence.

Having the Holy Spirit

ROM 8:15–16 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but *you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.”* ¹⁶*The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children.* NET

1JN 4:13 *By this we know that we reside in God and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit.* NET

Note that we can be confident that God has given the Holy Spirit to us through evidence such as: indications of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit in our lives (cf. Gal 5:22); having a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit (some of which are more obvious than others); and recognition of the Holy Spirit’s help, such as his empowerment or guidance. Moreover, we can sense or have an inner awareness of God, which is constant evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Obeying God

1JN 2:3–6 *We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands.* ⁴Anyone who says, “I know God,” but does not obey God’s commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. ⁵But if someone obeys God’s teaching, then in that person God’s love has truly reached its goal. This is how we can be sure we are living in God: ⁶Whoever says that he lives in God must live as Jesus lived. NCV™

Loving other Christians

1JN 3:14, 18–19 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers and sisters.* Whoever does not love is still under the power of death. ... ¹⁸My children, *our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.* ¹⁹This, then, is how we will know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God’s presence. GNT

Further reasons

1JN 1:9 *But if we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.* NET

JOHN 6:37 [JESUS:] Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and *the one who comes to me I will never send away.* NET

Jesus assures us that he will not reject anyone who comes to him.

How does loving other Christians give assurance that we are right with God?

Choose one of the other reasons given for assurance of being right with God – and explain why it gives assurance.

Are you sure of being right with God - and of salvation? If so, why?

Pray for persecuted Christians

II. Staying Right with God

See also:

- *By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ, Ch. 22*

As seen in the first half of this study, being made right with God involves being forgiven and granted righteousness. Having been made right with God, it is critical that we live in accordance with this standing, so as to stay right with God. The following topics deal with some key aspects involved in staying right with God.

a) The Need to Obey God

See also:

- *II. Obeying God*, Ch. 23

Obedience does not make us righteous nor earn us salvation. But we need to obey God in keeping with the righteous state before God that is granted to believers through faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, in striving to obey God and to do his will, we effectively accept or grasp the undeserved salvation made possible by God's grace. (The same points can be made regarding good deeds – an aspect of obeying God – the subject of the following chapter section.)

Obedience accompanies belief

ROM 16:26B And by the command of the eternal God it [the gospel] is made known to all nations *that they might believe and obey*. NCV™

God requires us to both believe and obey him. Thus obedience ought to accompany belief.

Obedience leads to righteousness

ROM 6:16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of *obedience, which leads to righteousness?* ESV

Righteousness involves conformity to the will of God. As such obedience is critical for it. However, as is the case earlier in this chapter, righteousness is also sometimes spoken of in a stricter legal sense – in regard to being deemed as righteous by God. This cannot be achieved just by obedience, simply because it is impossible to obey God's law perfectly so as to be declared completely righteous before him. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that one can be declared as righteous in this sense.

But bear in mind that obedience goes hand in hand with faith, as shown above in *Obedience accompanies belief*. Faith requires obedience and is shown to be valid by it. No one will be declared righteous on Judgment Day without having endeavoured to be obedient. So Paul can say in Romans 6:16 (above) that obedience

“leads to righteousness”, a concept applicable to all senses of the word “righteousness”.

Obedience leads to holiness

ROM 6:22 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But now that you have been freed from sin and have *become God’s slaves, the benefit you reap is sanctification*, and the result is eternal life. ISV

Here Paul speaks of becoming slaves in obedience to God, which brings sanctification, a term akin to holiness.

Obedience brings one into a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ . . .

JER 7:23A [GOD, REFERRING TO THE ISRAELITES:] I also explicitly commanded them: “*Obey me. If you do, I will be your God and you will be my people.* Live exactly the way I tell you and things will go well with you.” NET

MARK 3:35 [JESUS:] For *whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.* NET

. . . God and Jesus Christ are with those who obey

JOHN 14:23 Jesus answered him, “Whoever loves me will *obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live with him.*” GNT

Obedience and doing God’s will are critical for salvation

HEB 5:9 After he had finished his work, he became the source of *eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him.* GW

MATT 7:21 [JESUS:] *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven – only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.* NET

Obedience leads to eternal life

MATT 19:16–17 A man came to Jesus and asked, “*Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?*”¹⁷ Jesus said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? Only God is good. *If you want to have eternal life, you must obey his commandments.*” CEV

JOHN 8:51 [JESUS:] I tell you the solemn truth, *if anyone obeys my teaching, he will never see death.* NET

Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction

2THES 1:8–10 *With flaming fire he [Christ] will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will undergo the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, ¹⁰when he comes to be glorified among his saints and admired on that day among all who have believed – and you did in fact believe our testimony.* NET

Explain the connection between obedience and holiness.

How does obedience lead to eternal life?

Why do you obey God?

b) The Need for Good Deeds

While good deeds do not make us right with God, they are critical for staying right with God – not least because they accompany things that are indicative of being right with God. As such, good deeds prove that one’s faith and Christianity are valid – and consequently they are important for one’s salvation.

Note that good deeds are also involved in obeying God, the subject of the previous section.

We are to persistently do good deeds

TITUS 3:1, 14 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TITUS WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to *be ready for every good work, ...* ¹⁴And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. ESV

True faith involves good deeds

JAMES 2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also *faith without works is dead.* NET

GAL 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight – *the only thing that matters is faith working through love.* NET

Faith is more than just a matter of one’s intellect. It involves an active trust in God that is manifested in acts of love, i.e. good deeds.

Good deeds are critical for salvation and eternal life

HEB 6:9–12 [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] Even though we speak like this, dear friends, *we are convinced of better things in your case, things that point to salvation.* ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have ministered to the saints and continue to minister to them. ¹¹But we want each of you to continue to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to give full assurance to your hope. ¹²Then, instead of being lazy, you will become imitators of those who are inheriting the promises through faith and patience. ISV

ROM 2:6–7 *He [God] will reward each one according to his works: ⁷eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality, ...* NET

Note: Our good deeds do not earn salvation, for it is by grace

EPH 2:8–9 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹it is not from works, so that no one can boast.* NET

In v. 9, “works” may be primarily referring to things done in order to obey the law, but even so here it is very much applicable to good works or deeds (cf. v. 10). Any such good “works” do not earn us righteousness and salvation. They are an effect of these things rather than a cause. Rather, salvation comes by God’s grace.

How can we “be ready for every good work” (cf. Titus 3:1) and, similarly, “learn to devote [ourselves] ...to good works” (cf. Titus 3:14)?

Explain in your own words the connection between faith and good deeds.

Why are good deeds critical for our salvation and yet do not earn us salvation?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

See also:

- c) *Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, Ch. 14

Through what Jesus Christ has accomplished, believers have been set free from the Mosaic Law (the law given through Moses) as the means of being made right with God. As such, many aspects of the law are no longer applicable, particularly the regulations regarding making atonement for sin.

This does not mean that we are permitted to sin. For we are still to obey the spiritual and moral commands of the law that remain pertinent to our relationship with God and to our relationships with other people. But rather than being preoccupied with doggedly obeying rules, we are to be focused on living by God's Holy Spirit. In doing so we are better able to avoid sin and more effectively fulfill God's will.

Our freedom from the Mosaic Law does not permit us to sin . . .

GAL 5:13 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] My brothers and sisters, *God called you to be free, but do not use your freedom as an excuse to do what pleases your sinful self. Serve each other with love.* NCV™

Freedom from the Mosaic Law is being referred to here.

. . . In fact, sinning results in enslavement to sin

JOHN 8:34 Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, *everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin.* NET

We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit

ROM 7:6 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But now we have been released from the law, because we have died to what controlled us [the law], so that we may serve in the new life of the Spirit and not under the old written code. NET

Living by the Holy Spirit involves: being both alert to and responsive to the Spirit's promptings; and relying on the Spirit's power, to enable

and transform us. Along with this, our minds should be focused on things of the Spirit (as per Romans 8:5 in the following subsection).

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

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

GAL 5:16 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] **But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.** NET

In the above passages, “flesh” denotes our sinful nature.

. . . and live in God’s grace

ACTS 13:43 When the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking with them and were persuading them *to continue in the grace of God*. NET

After experiencing God’s grace in being made right with him and being given salvation (cf. *Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, Ch. 14), Christians are to live in the realm of his grace. This primarily involves being faithful to God and holding to the faith – thus remaining under his grace, staying right with him. It also encompasses trusting in God’s grace to meet one’s needs, notably spiritual needs.

Living in God’s grace is complementary to living by the Holy Spirit. Additionally it contrasts in particular with living by the law.

Note: Inner righteousness and right attitudes are needed, rather than mere compliance with rules

MATT 5:20–22A, 27–28 [JESUS:] For I tell you, *unless your righteousness goes beyond that of the experts in the law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* ²¹“You have heard that it was said to an older generation, ‘Do not murder,’ and ‘whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.’” ²²*But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to*

judgment. ... ²⁷*"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'* ²⁸*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* NET

In v. 20 Jesus refers to the Jewish leaders' lack of true, inner righteousness. They gave the appearance of complying with the law's commandments – and indeed probably did largely comply with its rules and regulations. But their characters were not consistent with the spirit of the law. Jesus may well have had this latter point in view in subsequently speaking of attitudes that should accompany obedience to such commands as those forbidding murder (vv. 21–22a) and adultery (vv. 27–28).

In what sense are Christians free from the Mosaic Law?

What is one tip that you could give a young Christian on: how to stop living by the sinful nature; and/or how to live by the Holy Spirit?

What do you need to bear in mind the most in order to better live by the Spirit?

d) Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ

See also:

- II. *Being 'in' Jesus Christ*, Ch. 16

Paul often speaks of believers being or acting "in" Christ. This refers to their close relationship and association with Jesus Christ, in which they are even identified with him. (See also the introductory comments under *II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ*, Ch. 16.)

Believers are to live their lives in accordance with this relationship. As such, in addition to being mindful of the relationship, believers should: be dependent on Jesus Christ in whom they subsist; and act in a way consistent with Jesus Christ and his teachings.

Live "in" Jesus Christ

1COR 4:17B [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] He [Timothy] will help you remember *my way of life in Christ Jesus*, just as I teach it in all the churches everywhere. NCV™

Remain "in" Jesus Christ

JOHN 15:4–6 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up.* NET

We live "in" Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .

COL 2:5–7 [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your morale and *the firmness of your faith in Christ*. ⁶Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith* just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. NET

Paul appears to associate having a firm faith in Christ (v. 5) – and being established in the faith (v. 7; cf. AMP, NKJV, NRSV) – with living in Christ (v. 6) and being “rooted and built up in him” (v. 7).

... and by holding to his teachings

JOHN 15:7, 10 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. ... ¹⁰If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.* NET

One remains in Jesus Christ (v. 7) and similarly in his love (v. 10), by holding to his words (v. 7) including his commands (v. 10).

Speak “in” Jesus Christ

ROM 9:1 [PAUL:] *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—* ESV

Being “in” Jesus Christ we should speak and act (as per the following subsection) “in” Jesus Christ, in a manner consistent with this standing. Doing so involves speaking and acting in accordance with Jesus Christ’s teachings and faith in him (as reflected by the previous two subsections).

Act towards others “in” Jesus Christ

EPH 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.* NET

PHIL 2:29 [PAUL, TO THE PHILIPPIAN BELIEVERS:] *So welcome him in the Lord with all joy, and make sure you honor such people highly.* ISV

Do God’s work “in” Jesus Christ

ROM 16:12 [PAUL, TO THE ROMAN BELIEVERS:] *Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.* ISV

Rejoice “in” Jesus Christ

PHIL 3:1A *Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!* NET

“In” Jesus Christ, we are to rejoice – “be joyful in your union with the Lord” (GNT).

Further aspects of living “in” Jesus Christ

1THESS 5:16–18 *Be joyful always, ¹⁷pray at all times, ¹⁸be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.* GNT

EPH 6:10 Finally, *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.* ESV

Believers are to be spiritually strong “in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power” (GNT; cf. AMP).

In what sense are Christians “in” Jesus Christ?

What does living “in” Jesus Christ involve doing?

How conscious should we be of living “in” Jesus Christ? For example, when we relate to others, should we be conscious of doing so “in” Jesus Christ?

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

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support based on locally identified needs.

Christian Solidarity International – csi-usa.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

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

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

It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org.

Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin – rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com

This site provides weekly prayer bulletins.

The Bible League – bl.org.au/get-involved/bibles-for-the-persecuted

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com

VOM helps persecuted Christians spread the gospel. It also gives material aid.

World Watch Monitor – 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

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