

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

Paul Mallison

The Bible Unpacked™

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The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

22. Having Faith in 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. Faith and Hope

Faith in God is absolutely fundamental to the Christian life. We in fact need to continually live by faith, doing so in all areas of our lives. Hope is also vital for Christians. It is necessary for such things as sustaining and strengthening us – particularly in sustaining our faith.

a) Have Faith in God

See also:

- a) *Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, Ch. 14
- c) *Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General*, Ch. 21
- d) *Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Reasons to Believe*, Ch. 21
- e) *Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*, Ch. 21
- b) *Have Faith in God and Pray*, Ch. 40

Have faith in God and Jesus Christ

MARK 11:22B [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Have faith in God.* NET

EPH 1:15–16 [PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS:] For this reason, because I have heard of *your faith in the Lord Jesus* and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you when I remember you in my prayers. NET

Live by faith

2COR 5:7 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For *we live by faith, not by sight.* ISV

God's people are to live by faith, persistently having faith in God and the realization of his promises.

Grow in faith

2THES 1:3 [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] We must always thank God for you, brothers and sisters. This is only right, because *your faith is growing more and more*, and the love that every one of you has for each other is increasing. NCV™

Have strong faith . . .

2COR 8:7 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] But as you *excel in everything – in faith*, in speech, in knowledge, and in all eagerness and in the love from us that is in you – make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too. NET

ACTS 6:5A The proposal pleased the entire group [of believers], so they chose Stephen, *a man full of faith* and of the Holy Spirit ... NET

. . . For faith is tested

JAMES 1:3 [JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] You know that such *testing of your faith* produces endurance. GW

Persist in faith

COL 1:23A [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] This is on the condition that you *continue in faith* without being moved from the solid foundation of the hope that the Good News contains. GW

Reasons to trust (and so have faith) in God: God's unfailing love; . . .

PS 52:8B [DAVID:] *I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*
ESV

PS 13:5 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *I rely on your constant love; I will be glad, because you will rescue me.* GNT

. . . God's power; . . .

EX 14:31 *When the Israelites saw the great power the LORD had used against the Egyptians, they feared the LORD, and they trusted him and his servant Moses.* NCV™

. . . and God's past deliverance

2TIM 4:17-18 [PAUL:] But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed for all the Gentiles to hear. And so *I was delivered from the lion's mouth!*
¹⁸*The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.*

NET

The Lord (probably a reference to Jesus Christ) had earlier delivered Paul (v. 17), giving Paul reason to continue to trust or have faith that the Lord would take care of him (v. 18).

What tip/s could you give to a younger Christian on how to “live by faith”?

How has your faith been tested? What have you found helpful in such times?

Give one reason why you trust God (not necessarily one of the ones specified in the text). Say how it helps you trust God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) What Faith in God Involves Doing

This section discusses what having faith in God (and Jesus Christ) involves doing. Generally speaking, it involves believing and trusting God. More specifically, it involves believing and trusting that God will: fulfill his promises; care for us; and respond to our requests.

To have faith in God: believe in him (and what he says); . . .

1PET 1:21 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] Through Christ *you believe in God*, who raised Christ from the dead and gave him glory. *So your faith and your hope are in God.* NCV™

This verse links belief with faith. As such it reflects that having faith in God involves believing in him. Such belief includes believing what he says, as is perhaps suggested here.

. . . and trust in God

PROV 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.* NET

PS 62:8A *Trust in him at all times, you people!* NET

Trusting in God is an integral part of having faith in God. Having faith in God can be defined as believing and trusting God. For we are to believe in God and what he says, and also confidently trust in him and what he says in regard to our own lives. One could say having faith means that: in our minds we are to believe and in our hearts we are to trust.

Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises

ACTS 27:23–25 [PAUL, TO MEN SAILING ON A SHIP WITH HIM IN A BAD STORM:] For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve came to me ²⁴and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously granted you the safety of all who are sailing with you.’ ²⁵Therefore keep up your courage, men, *for I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told.* NET

2PET 3:13 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *But in keeping with his [God’s] promise, we are looking forward to new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.* ISV

In “looking forward” to the fulfillment of God’s promises one demonstrates faith in them being fulfilled. Note that God’s promises include promises regarding the afterlife (in view here), promises to take care of us (cf. Acts 27:23–25 ↑) and promises to answer prayer. The latter two are reflected in the next two subsections.

Have faith that God will care for you

ISA 50:10 All of you that honor the LORD and obey the words of his servant, *the path you walk may be dark indeed, but trust in the LORD, rely on your God.* GNT

HEB 11:32–34 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. ³³*Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴put out raging fires, escaped death by the sword, found strength in weakness, became powerful in battle, and routed foreign armies.* ISV

Various people of God are shown here to have had faith that God would take care of them amidst the threat of things such as powerful rulers and their forces, wild beasts, fire and the sword – most of which carried the threat of imminent death.

Have faith that God will do what you ask

PS 5:3 [DAVID:] *LORD, in the morning you will hear me; in the morning I will present my case to you and then wait expectantly for an answer.* NET

MATT 9:27–30A As Jesus went on from there, *two blind men followed him, shouting, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”* ²⁸When he went into the house, the blind men came to him. *Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.”* ²⁹*Then he touched their eyes saying, “Let it be done for you according to your faith.”* ³⁰*And their eyes were opened.* NET

Note: Faith involves believing in what we do not see

HEB 11:1 Now *faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.* NET

In your own words explain what having faith in God involves doing.

What have you experienced of God's care that should encourage you – and people you tell – to have faith that God will continue to care for you?

Is there something that you need to learn to have faith in God to do?
What can you do about having greater faith in God?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Importance of Faith (I): Godly Living

By faith we stand firm

2COR 1:24 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] I do not mean that we rule over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because *by faith you stand firm*. NET

Faith produces obedience to God

HEB 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going.* NET

Faith produces work in service to God

1THES 1:3A [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] We continually recall before God our Father *the things you have done because of your faith* and the work you have done because of your love. NCV™

Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests

MATT 21:22 *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.* GNT

1CHR 5:20 They [Israelite soldiers] received divine help in fighting them, and the Hagrites and all their allies were handed over to them. They cried out to God during the battle; *he responded to their prayers because they trusted in him.* NET

If we have faith nothing will be impossible

MATT 17:19–20 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why couldn’t we cast it [a demon] out?” ²⁰He told them, “It was because of your little faith. I tell you the truth, *if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you.*” NET

The “mountain” signifies a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, here presumably alluding to difficulties encountered in advancing God’s kingdom. Jesus is emphasizing genuine or quality faith, rather than amount of faith. If we have such faith nothing will be impossible, both in our service of God and in confronting issues in our lives. As such

we are to have faith (and pray) that what we understand to be in accordance with God's will, will take place.

How does faith in God produce service and obedience to God?

When you ask God to do something, do you really believe that he will do it? What can we do about having more faith – or more consistently having faith – when we petition God?

Do you face a seemingly insurmountable "mountain" (cf. Matt 17:19–20)? Should you view/approach this differently in the light of Jesus' words in Matthew 17:20? If so, what will you do differently?

d) The Importance of Faith (II): Blessings

Note that the topics in the previous section should also be viewed as blessings that come through faith.

By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ

COL 1:22–23A [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But his Son became a human and died. So *God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.* ²³*But you must stay deeply rooted and firm in your faith.* CEV

EPH 3:16–17A [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, ¹⁷*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...* NET

By faith we receive what God has promised . . .

HEB 6:12 [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] We do not want you to become lazy. Be like those who *through faith and patience will receive what God has promised.* NCV™

. . . By faith we will receive the promises and salvation of the afterlife

HEB 10:35–39 [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] So *do not throw away your confidence, since it holds a great reward for you.* ³⁶*For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will you can receive what he has promised.* ³⁷For “in a very little while the one who is coming will return and will not delay; ³⁸*but my righteous one will live by faith, and if he turns back, my soul will take no pleasure in him.*” ³⁹*Now, we do not belong to those who turn back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.* ISV

“You need endurance” (v. 36a) in the context may well have persevering in faith in view (vv. 35, 38–39) as much as persevering in doing God's will (the two are very closely associated anyway). The result of such perseverance is that we will receive what God has promised (v. 36b; cf. vv. 35, 39). In vv. 38–39 Paul further stresses the

importance of continuing to live by faith, finishing by emphasizing that it is those who have faith who are and/or will be saved.

By faith our needs are met

ACTS 3:16 [PETER, SPEAKING TO A CROWD ABOUT THE HEALING OF A FORMER CRIPPLE:] You see this man, and you know him. *He put his faith in the name of Jesus and was made strong. Faith in Jesus made this man completely well while everyone was watching.* CEV

2CHR 20:20, 22 Jehoshaphat's army went out into the Desert of Tekoa early in the morning. As they were starting out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, people of Judah and Jerusalem. *Have faith in the LORD your God, and you will stand strong. Have faith in his prophets, and you will succeed.*" ... ²²As they began to sing and praise God, *the LORD set ambushes for the people of Ammon, Moab, and Edom who had come to attack Judah. And they were defeated.*

NCV™

Jehoshaphat and his army were facing the daunting task of repelling a much larger invading army. As such they were in great need.

Trusting in God brings joy and peace

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

Ps 33:21 *For our hearts rejoice in him, for we trust in his holy name.*

NET

ISA 26:3 [A SONG TO GOD:] *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.* ESV

How does trusting in God help you? What blessings from trusting God are you aware of in your life?

Briefly explain the role of faith in a person continuing on as a Christian.

If a Christian has a problem that persists despite the prayers of themselves and others, should the possibility of a lack of faith be considered? If not, why not? If so, how should it be approached?

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Have Hope in God

Hope for a believer involves an assurance of their future, based on the truth of God's promises – rather than merely being an unfounded optimism.

Put your hope in God and Jesus Christ

Ps 131:3 O Israel, *hope in the LORD now and forevermore!* NET

EPH 1:12 [PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS:] Let us, then, who were the first to *hope in Christ*, praise God's glory! GNT

Put your hope in God's promises

Ps 119:114, 147 [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] You are my defender and protector; *I put my hope in your promise. ...* ¹⁴⁷Before sunrise I call to you for help; *I place my hope in your promise.* GNT

Set your hope on God's timely care

2COR 1:10 [PAUL, SPEAKING OF GOD:] He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* ESV

1TIM 6:17 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TIMOTHY WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but *to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment.* GNT

Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow

TITUS 2:13 [PAUL:] At the same time we can expect *what we hope for – the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.* GW

1PET 1:13 Therefore, get your minds ready for action by being fully sober, and *set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.* NET

Reasons to have hope in God: God's love and faithfulness; . . .

LAM 3:21–23 [JEREMIAH:] *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* ESV

. . . and the deeds of God, our Savior

JER 14:8A, 22 [JEREMIAH, TO GOD:] *You are Israel's only hope; you are the one who saves us from disaster. ... ²²None of the idols of the nations can send rain; the sky by itself cannot make showers fall. We have put our hope in you, O LORD our God, because you are the one who does these things.* GNT

God's deeds in saving us (v. 8a) and providing for us (v. 22), give reason to place our hope in him.

Other godly sources of hope

ROM 15:4 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* ESV

PHILEM 1:22 [PAUL, TO PHILEMON:] *At the same time also, prepare a place for me to stay, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given back to you.* NET

Prayer encourages hope in God.

What does putting your hope in God involve doing?

What things produce hope in God?

Are there times when you recognize that you are lacking in hope?
What can you do in such times – or in preparation for such times – to
have hope?

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) The Importance of Hope

Hope is vital for faith

COL 1:5 [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] *Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the gospel ...* NET

HEB 11:1 Now *faith is being sure of what we hope for*, being convinced of what we do not see. NET

The hope Christians have is not a groundless longing, but a confident assurance. Such hope stimulates and supports ongoing faith (cf. Col 1:5 ↑), which has as its focus that for which believers hope (cf. Heb 11:1 ↑).

Hope helps us remain firm

HEB 6:19A [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *We have this hope as an anchor for our souls, firm and secure ...* ISV

The reference is to the hope that comes from God's promise to Abraham (cf. vv. 13–18) as applied to all God's people in regard to their salvation.

Further ways hope is important for living the Christian life

ROM 12:12 *Be joyful in hope*, patient in trouble, and persistent in prayer. ISV

2COR 3:12 [PAUL:] *Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ...* ESV

1JN 3:2–3 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. ³*And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure.* NET

Note: The depressing plight of a lack of hope

JOB 7:6 *My days go by faster than a weaver's tool, and they come to an end without hope.* NCV™

1THESS 4:13 Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, *about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope.* NET

Unbelievers without hope can only grieve over death – both over the deaths of loved ones (primarily in view here) and their own certain deaths. Believers still grieve over the deaths of loved ones, but it is not a grief devoid of hope.

Explain in your own words the relationship between hope and faith.

Explain either: why hope engenders joy (cf. Rom 12:12); or why hope leads to boldness (cf. 2Cor 3:12)?

How would it help you to more persistently hope in God, being more mindful of it? What changes could you make to enable yourself to do this more?

II. What Not to Do

To live a life of faith, we should ensure that we do not lack faith in God. As such we need to avoid things which hinder faith in God. Notably we should avoid doubt, fear, worry and trusting in other things. Some verses which encourage believers not to be afraid and not to worry are amongst the best-loved verses in the Bible.

a) Do Not Lack Faith

Do not be lacking in faith . . .

MARK 4:37–40 Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped. ³⁸But he [Jesus] was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They [his disciples] woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to die?” ³⁹So he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Be quiet! Calm down!” Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm. ⁴⁰And he said to them, “*Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?*” NET

. . . Do not doubt

MATT 14:31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him [Peter], saying to him, “*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*” NET

JAMES 1:6 [JAMES, SPEAKING OF ONE ASKING GOD FOR SOMETHING:] *But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind.* NET

The “wave” imagery depicts weak, unstable faith – wavering between belief of sorts (as shown in asking) and unbelief (as shown in doubting).

Do not test or question God

Ps 78:18–22 *They [the Israelites] tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. ¹⁹They spoke against God, saying, “Can God spread a table in the wilderness? ²⁰He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?” ²¹Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, ²²because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.* ESV

We should not speak against God, doubting and questioning such things as his wisdom, his power and his commitment to us. In doing so we in a sense “test” God (v. 18) and display a lack of belief and trust (i.e. faith) in him (v. 22).

Lack of faith is associated with not obeying God

DEUT 9:23 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] And when he sent you from Kadesh-Barnea and told you, “Go up and possess the land I have given you,” *you rebelled against the LORD your God and would neither believe nor obey him.* NET

PS 106:24–25 They [the Israelites] rejected the fruitful land; *they did not believe his promise.* ²⁵They grumbled in their tents; *they did not obey the LORD.* NET

Lack of faith can have other detrimental effects

MATT 17:19–20A Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “*Why could we not cast it [a demon] out?*” ²⁰*He said to them, “Because of your little faith.*” ESV

ISA 7:9 [GOD, TO AHAZ:] Ephraim’s leader is Samaria, and Samaria’s leader is the son of Remaliah. *If your faith does not remain firm, then you will not remain secure.* NET

Here God warns Ahaz, the king of Judah, that if he did not firmly have faith in God’s promises (cf. vv. 7–8) regarding a threatened invasion (cf. vv. 5–6) failing to eventuate, he would “not last” (NASB; cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NKJV).

Lack of faith can even bring God’s punishment

JUDE 1:5 Don’t forget what happened to those people that the Lord rescued from Egypt. *Some of them did not have faith, and he later destroyed them.* CEV

At what times do you doubt or lack faith? How can you counteract this?

Is questioning God always a bad thing? What was it about the Israelites' questioning of God (cf. Ps 78:18–22) that was wrong?

What are some of the detrimental effects that a lack of faith can have? (Do not limit your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

Do not be afraid or discouraged

DEUT 1:21 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Look, he [God] has placed the land in front of you! Go up, take possession of it, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, said to do. *Do not be afraid or discouraged!* NET

Do not be afraid – have faith in God, trusting in him

ACTS 27:23–25 [PAUL, TO OTHERS WITH HIM ON A BOAT IN A SEVERE STORM:] For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve came to me ²⁴and said, ‘*Do not be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously granted you the safety of all who are sailing with you.*’ ²⁵Therefore keep up your courage, men, *for I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told.* NET

PS 56:3–4 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *When I am afraid, I trust in you. ⁴In God – I boast in his promise – in God I trust, I am not afraid. What can mere men do to me?* NET

JOHN 14:1 *Jesus said, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me.* NCV™

Do not be afraid – be confident

PS 27:3 [DAVID:] *Even when an army is deployed against me, I do not fear. Even when war is imminent, I remain confident.* NET

Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous . . .

JOSH 1:6–7, 9, 18B [GOD, TO JOSHUA:] *“Be strong and courageous, because you’ll be leading this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors. ⁷Only be strong and very courageous to ensure that you obey all the instructions that my servant Moses gave you—turn neither to the right nor to the left from it—so that you may succeed wherever you go. ... ⁹I’ve commanded you, haven’t I? Be strong and courageous. Don’t be fearful or discouraged, because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” ... ¹⁸... Only be strong and courageous.”* ISV

. . . Look to God for your strength

1SAM 30:6 David was very upset, for the men were thinking of stoning him; each man grieved bitterly over his sons and daughters. *But David drew strength from the LORD his God.* NET

EPH 6:10–11 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Finally, *be strengthened in the Lord [Christ] and in the strength of his power. "Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* NET

Do not even be afraid of death

REV 2:10 [JESUS CHRIST:] *Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer.* The devil is about to have some of you thrown into prison so you may be tested, and you will experience suffering for ten days. *Remain faithful even to the point of death,* and I will give you the crown that is life itself. NET

What would you say to a believer weighed down with fear, to help them to instead trust in God?

How can we really be confident and courageous when facing fearful circumstances?

What does the fact that God actually commands us to be strong and courageous and not fearful or discouraged (cf. Josh 1:6–7, 9, 18b) indicate about how we should react to fear?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

God is far more powerful than our enemies

2CHR 32:7–8 [KING HEZEKIAH, TO HIS ARMY:] *“Be strong and brave! Don’t be afraid and don’t panic because of the king of Assyria and this huge army that is with him! We have with us one who is stronger than those who are with him. ⁸He has with him mere human strength, but the LORD our God is with us to help us and fight our battles!”* The army was encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah. NET

God is always with his people

DEUT 31:6, 8 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Be strong and courageous! Do not fear or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who is going with you. He will not fail you or abandon you!”* ... ⁸The LORD is indeed going before you – he will be with you; he will not fail you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged! NET

God helps his people

PS 46:1–3 God is our strong refuge; *he is truly our helper in times of trouble. ²For this reason we do not fear when the earth shakes, and the mountains tumble into the depths of the sea, ³when its waves crash and foam, and the mountains shake before the surging sea.* (Selah) NET

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

God saves his people

JER 46:27 [GOD:] You descendants of Jacob, my servants, *do not be afraid; do not be terrified, people of Israel. For I will rescue you and your descendants from the faraway lands where you are captives.* The descendants of Jacob will return to their land and enjoy peace. They will be secure and no one will terrify them. NET

God is a refuge for his people, protecting them

PS 91:4–7 *He [God] will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*

⁵You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ESV

Verse 4a likens God's protection of his people to that of a bird protecting its young. The term "pinions" means the outer part of a bird's wing. A "buckler" (v. 4b) is a type of shield.

God's promised blessings

ZEC 8:15 [GOD, THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH:] *But now I am planning to bless the people of Jerusalem and Judah. So don't be afraid.* GNT

LUKE 12:32 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give you the kingdom.* NET

Although they appeared vulnerable like a "little flock", the disciples were to inherit the kingdom, with the associated authority. As this was their destiny, there was no need to be afraid of what might be encountered in the meantime.

Further reasons

LUKE 12:6-7 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷In fact, even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.* NET

ISA 43:1-5 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. ⁵Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.* ESV

There are a number of reasons given here as to why the people should not fear, including some given in the preceding subsections.

Further reasons given here are: God has redeemed his people and they are his (vv. 1, 4b); they are precious and honored in his sight (v. 4a); and he loves them (v. 4a).

Note: Being afraid has grave consequences

PROV 29:25 *The fear of people becomes a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD will be set on high.* NET

JER 1:17 [GOD:] But you, Jeremiah, get yourself ready! Go and tell these people everything I instruct you to say. *Do not be terrified of them, or I will give you good reason to be terrified of them.* NET

State what is for you one of the main reasons why believers should not be afraid. Explain why you chose it.

In what ways can the fear of people be a "snare" (cf. Prov 29:25)?

Choose a verse or a passage from this and the previous section, to learn and remember the next time that you begin to fear something. Say why you chose it.

d) Do Not Worry

Do not worry – trust God with your concerns . . .

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

1PET 5:7 *Give all your worries to him, because he cares about you.* NCV™

. . . Ask God to provide for your physical needs

LUKE 11:2B–3 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *When you pray, say: Father, may your name be honored; may your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread, ...* NET

Do not worry about the cares of this life for God will provide

MATT 6:25–34 [JESUS:] *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't there more to life than food and more to the body than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds in the sky: They do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable than they are? ²⁷And which of you by worrying can add even one hour to his life? ²⁸Why do you worry about clothing? Think about how the flowers of the field grow; they do not work or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these! ³⁰And if this is how God clothes the wild grass, which is here today and tomorrow is tossed into the fire to heat the oven, won't he clothe you even more, you people of little faith? ³¹So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.* NET

Note that v. 33 indicates that rather than worrying about the cares of this life, we should focus instead on things of God

The futility and dangers of worrying about the cares of this life

LUKE 12:25–26 *And which of you by worrying can add an hour to his life? ²⁶So if you cannot do such a very little thing as this, why do you worry about the rest?* NET

MATT 13:22 [JESUS, EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF A PARABLE:] The seeds that fell among the thornbushes are also people who hear the message. *But they start worrying about the needs of this life and are fooled by the desire to get rich. So the message gets choked out, and they never produce anything.* CEV

Being worried and preoccupied with the cares of this life can “crowd out” the place of God’s word and his kingdom in our lives, choking our spiritual lives.

What do you worry about?

What reasons do the verses in this section give for why we should not worry?

What things do the verses in this section say to do instead of worrying?

e) Do Not Trust in Other Things

Do not trust in other people, but rather trust in God . . .

JER 17:5–6 The LORD says, “*I will put a curse on people who trust in mere human beings, who depend on mere flesh and blood for their strength, and whose hearts have turned away from the LORD.* ⁶*They will be like a shrub in the desert. They will not experience good things even when they happen. It will be as though they were growing in the desert, in a salt land where no one can live.* NET

Ps 118:8–9 *It is better to take shelter in the LORD than to trust in people.* ⁹*It is better to take shelter in the LORD than to trust in princes.* NET

. . . People are not worth trusting in

Ps 146:3–4 *Don’t put your trust in human leaders; no human being can save you.* ⁴*When they die, they return to the dust; on that day all their plans come to an end.* GNT

Do not trust in yourself

PROV 28:26 *The one who trusts in himself is stupid, but the one who lives wisely will be kept safe.* ISV

PROV 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.* NET

Do not trust in riches

PROV 11:28 *The one who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.* NET

Do not trust in worldly power

ISA 31:1 [ISAIAH, TO HIS PEOPLE:] *Those who go down to Egypt for help are as good as dead, those who rely on war horses, and trust in Egypt’s many chariots and in their many, many horsemen.* But they do not rely on the Holy One of Israel and do not seek help from the LORD. NET

Do not trust in wickedness

ISA 47:10–11 [GOD, TO THE BABYLONIANS:] *For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, ‘No one sees me’; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; And you have said in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one else besides me.’ “Therefore evil shall come upon you; You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; You will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, Which you shall not know.* NKJV

In what way or in what things do you trust in yourself? Should the focus of your trust be more on God in any of these things?

Is seeking to ensure we have enough money to support ourselves in our retirement in any sense trusting in money instead of God? Why or why not?

What are the dangers of trusting in other things instead of God?

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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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