The Bible Unpacked

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

36. Standing Firm

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 “AMP” are taken from the *Amplified® Bible,* Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).


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: 4-Sep-21.
Contents

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

I. General
   a) Be Faithful to God ................................................................................................. 2
   b) Remember God and His Word ............................................................................... 4
   c) Hold to the Faith ..................................................................................................... 6
   d) Persist until the End ............................................................................................... 9
   e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ’s Return ........................................................................ 11

II. Spiritual Warfare
   a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare ................................................................. 16
   b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare ............................................................................ 19
   c) Counteraction of Demons .................................................................................... 22
   d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices .......................................................................... 25

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

The New Testament contains numerous warnings and exhortations to be faithful to God and to hold to the Christian faith. It is every Christian’s constant challenge to do so. We need to stand firm, until the end – while ever watching for Jesus Christ’s return and the fulfillment of our hope.
a) Be Faithful to God

Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ

1Ki 8:61   [Solomon, to the people:] *May you, his people, always be faithful to the LORD our God, obeying all his laws and commands, as you do today.*” GNT

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

Hold fast to God and his ways

2Ki 18:6  For he [Hezekiah] *held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.* ESV

Serve God faithfully

1Sam 12:24  Obey the LORD and *serve him faithfully with all your heart.* Remember the great things he has done for you. GNT

Do not be unfaithful to God by not keeping his commands

1Chr 10:13  So Saul died because *he was unfaithful to the LORD and did not obey the LORD’s instructions;* he even tried to conjure up underworld spirits. NET

Do not forsake God

2Chr 29:6  [Hezekiah, to the priests and Levites of Judah:] *For our fathers were unfaithful; they did what is evil in the sight of the LORD our God and abandoned him! They turned away from the LORD’s dwelling place and rejected him.* NET

God protects and blesses those who are faithful to him

Ps 31:23  Love the LORD, all his faithful people. *The LORD protects the faithful,* but punishes the proud as they deserve. GNT

1Sam 26:23a  *The LORD rewards those who are faithful* and righteous. GNT
God punishes those who are unfaithful

**NEH 1:8b** [God, to the Israelites:] *If you act unfaithfully, I will scatter you among the nations.* NET

Why do you remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What is involved in serving God faithfully with all our heart (cf. 1Sam 12:24)? What attitudes and actions are needed to do so?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What challenges do you often face in remaining faithful to God? What helps you to remain faithful in the face of these things?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
b) Remember God and His Word

Ensure you remember God

Deut 8:11, 18 [Moses, to the Israelites:] Be sure you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments, ordinances, and statutes that I am giving you today. ... 18You must remember the LORD your God, for he is the one who gives ability to get wealth; if you do this he will confirm his covenant that he made by oath to your ancestors, even as he has to this day. NET

Remember what God has done

1Chr 16:12 Recall the miraculous deeds he performed, his mighty acts and the judgments he decreed, ... NET

Remember God’s word and commands

Ps 119:16, 93 [A psalmist, to God:] I will take pleasure in your laws and remember your words. ... 93I won’t ever forget your teachings, because you give me new life by following them. CEV

Persistently meditate on God’s word and commands . . .

Ps 119:97, 148 [A psalmist, to God:] O how I love your law! All day long I meditate on it. ... 148My eyes anticipate the nighttime hours, so that I can meditate on your word. NET

. . . Keep God’s word and commands in your heart and thoughts

Deut 11:18a [Moses, to the Israelites:] Take these words of mine to heart and keep them in mind. GW

Deut 6:6–9 [Moses, to the Israelites:] “Let these words that I’m commanding you today be always on your heart. 7Teach them repeatedly to your children. Talk about them while sitting in your house or walking on the road, and as you lie down or get up. 8Tie them as reminders on your forearm, bind them on your forehead, and write them on the door frames of your house and on your gates.” ISV
God’s commands are to be on the hearts of his people (v. 6). As such his people should take steps to keep his commands in their thoughts (vv. 7–9).

**Note: Forgetting God has dreadful consequences**

**DEUT 8:19** [Moses, to the Israelites:] *If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship them and bow down to them, I warn you today that you will be destroyed.* NCV™

What steps could you take in order to more persistently meditate on God’s word?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What themes in God’s word do you need to focus on at this time?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How can apparent believers get to the point where they effectively forget God? What things should we look out for, so that we do not forget God?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
c) Hold to the Faith

See also:
- a) Be Faithful to God and Endure, Ch. 40

Continue in the faith

Acts 14:22 They strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, “We must enter the kingdom of God through many persecutions.” NET

The body of Christian beliefs is often referred to as “the faith”.

Stand firm

1Cor 15:58a [Paul:] My dear friends, stand firm and don’t be shaken. CEV

Hold to Christian teaching . . .

2Thes 2:15 [Paul, to the Thessalonian believers:] So, brothers and sisters, stand strong and continue to believe the teachings we gave you in our speaking and in our letter. NCV™

. . . Continue to live by Christian teaching

3Jn 1:3 [John, to his friend Gaius:] I was so happy when some fellow-Christians arrived and told me how faithful you are to the truth—just as you always live in the truth. GNT

Grow in the faith and in your knowledge

Phil 1:25 [Paul, to the Philippian believers:] Since I’m convinced of this, I know that I will continue to live and be with all of you. This will help you to grow and be joyful in your faith. GW

Col 1:10 [Paul, to believers:] You will produce fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God. NCV™

The final phrase quite likely speaks of growing or increasing in knowledge about God, quite possibly encompassing coming to know him better (cf. CEV, NIV, NLT). But note that some commentators interpret Paul to be speaking of “the knowledge of God” as the sphere in which we grow, or the means by which we grow.
Grow in all aspects of your Christian life . . .

2Pet 1:5–8 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith [moral] excellence, to excellence, knowledge; 6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. 8 For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately. NET

. . . and produce spiritual “fruit”

Gal 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. NET

These characteristics are described as “fruit of the Spirit” because their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit – like fruit from a tree. The implication is that our lives should produce such “fruit”.

What encourages you – particularly in times of doubt – to hold on to the faith, to continue believing the Bible’s teachings?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

To what extent have you grown in your knowledge of the faith in recent years? What are you doing – or could you do – towards furthering your growth?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Which of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22–23 do you think you most need to work on producing? What can you do regarding this?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
d) Persist until the End

Stand firm until the end

**Matt 24:13**  [Jesus, to his disciples:] But the one who endures to the end will be saved.  ESV

Persist so that you will receive the reward . . .

**Rom 2:7**  He [God] will give everlasting life to those who search for glory, honor, and immortality by persisting in doing what is good.  GW

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

. . . Be like an athlete, striving for a prize

**2Tim 4:7–8**  [Paul:] I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith!  Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing.  NET

Be careful not to turn away from God . . .

**Heb 3:12**  Be careful, brothers and sisters, that none of you ever develop a wicked, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.  GNT

**Heb 2:1**  Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.  NET

. . . Do not rebel against God

**Num 14:9a**  Only do not rebel against the LORD.  ESV

**Josh 22:29**  [The Israelites:] Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD by turning back today from following after the LORD by building an altar for burnt offerings, sacrifices, and tokens of peace aside from the altar of the LORD our God located in front of his dwelling place!  NET
Some people do fall away

**1Tim 4:1A** The Spirit says clearly that in later times some believers will desert the Christian faith. *GW*

**Falling away brings dire consequences**

**John 15:6** [Jesus:] *If 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*

How is the Christian life like a sporting contest (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7-8)?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

In what ways or in what things do we need to be careful, so as not to turn away from God?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

What are some indicators that people are falling away from God? What are the danger signs to look out for?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________
e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ’s Return

See also:
- b) The Timing of Jesus Christ’s Return, Ch. 15

Wait eagerly for Jesus Christ’s return and for all that will follow

**Phil 3:20–21** [Paul:] We, however, are citizens of heaven, and we eagerly wait for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. 

> He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body, using that power by which he is able to bring all things under his rule.  

**Jude 1:21** Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever.  

As we do not know when Jesus Christ will come, keep watch and be ready

**Matt 24:42–44** “So keep on watching, because you don’t know on what day your Lord is coming.  

> But be sure of this: if the owner of the house had known when during the night the thief would be coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into.  

> So you, too, must be ready, because at an hour you are not expecting him the Son of Man will come.”  

To be ready for Jesus Christ’s return, live a godly life . . .

**1 Tim 6:14** [Paul, to Timothy:] Do what you were commanded to do without wrong or blame until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.  

Likely Paul mentions Christ’s return (v. 14) to inspire Timothy to obey his instructions in order to be ready for it.

. . . and live a constructive life

**Matt 25:19–21** Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.  

> And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’  

> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You
have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ESV

The returning master (v. 19; cf. 24:50) represents Jesus Christ on his return, whereupon he will reward his faithful servants.

Do not live an ungodly life, leaving you unprepared for Jesus Christ’s return

Matt 24:48–51 But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ESV

Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ’s return will be only after certain events – and obvious to all

Matt 24:4–14, 26–27 Jesus answered them [his disciples], “Watch out that no one misleads you. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will mislead many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Make sure that you are not alarmed, for this must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 For nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these things are the beginning of birth pains. 9” Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of my name. 10 Then many will be led into sin, and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will appear and deceive many, 12 and because lawlessness will increase so much, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the person who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. ... 26 So then, if someone says to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe him. 27 For just like the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. NET
2Thes 2:3  *Do not let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place and the Wicked One appears, who is destined for hell.*  

GNT

The “Day” is the day of Christ’s return. The “Wicked One” is quite likely the first beast of Revelation 13, understood by many to be a final antichrist.

How does it help in living as a Christian to “keep on watching” (Matt 24:42) for Jesus Christ’s return?

Are there any indicators (cf. Matt 24:4–14) that Jesus Christ’s return may be drawing near?

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

See also:

- 5. Angels, Satan and Demons

Living as God wants necessarily means involvement in spiritual warfare. Believers are faced with challenges from spiritual adversaries and also from within themselves. Although the forces that oppose believers are formidable, the Bible gives clear instructions on how to counter any threat – through the supreme power of God.
a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

Believers are involved in conflict of a spiritual nature

1Tim 1:18b  [Paul, to Timothy:] I tell you this so you can follow them and fight the good fight.  
NCV™

The Greek rendered here as “fight the good fight” alludes to warfare (cf. AMP), in contrast to the Greek behind the same rendering later in 6:12. As such it refers to or at least reflects the spiritual warfare in which believers are involved.

Believers have spiritual enemies . . .

Eph 6:12  For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.  
NET

Although believers may have human opponents, primarily and ultimately their struggle is against spiritual powers.

. . . Believers have Satan as an enemy

1Pet 5:8  Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour.  
NET

Believers have human enemies, spiritually opposed to them

Phil 1:28a  Be brave when you face your enemies. Your courage will show them that they are going to be destroyed, and it will show you that you will be saved.  
CEV

Believers have human enemies who are opposed to them in regard to spiritual matters – notably in seeking to prevent the spread of the gospel and/or in seeking to impose their own opposing beliefs.

Believers face internal spiritual conflict

1Pet 2:11  [Peter, to believers:] Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and exiles to keep on abstaining from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.  
ISV

Gal 5:17  For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want.  
NET
The opposing desires of the sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers, produce spiritual conflict within believers. Note that the final clause is probably speaking of the influence of the sinful nature in hindering one from doing the good one wants to do – in conflict with the Holy Spirit. Alternatively, it possibly could be speaking of the Spirit helping us to not indulge the desires that we naturally want to fulfill.

God and Jesus Christ aid believers in spiritual warfare, enabling them to overcome

**2Tim 4:18** [Paul:] *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will take me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Glory belongs to him forever and ever! Amen.* ISV

**Rom 8:31, 37–39** [Paul:] What then shall we say about these things? *If God is for us, who can be against us? ... 37No, in all these things we have complete victory through him [Christ] who loved us! 38For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* NET

In what ways are you aware of spiritual warfare, particularly in being involved in it yourself?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What can believers do to resist Satan?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
How can we counteract “the desires of the flesh” (1Pet 2:11; cf. Gal 5:17)?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

Believers are to engage in spiritual warfare both in standing firm in their faith and in advancing the cause of God’s kingdom. Generally speaking, the former has a defensive sense and the latter an offensive sense.

Be on your guard against spiritual dangers

2Pet 3:17b Be on your guard, then, so that you will not be led away by the errors of lawless people and fall from your safe position. GNT

Resist Satan

James 4:7 So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you. NET

1Pet 5:9 Be firm in your faith and resist him [Satan], because you know that your fellow-believers in all the world are going through the same kind of sufferings. GNT

Use spiritual weapons and armor

2Cor 10:3–4 [Paul:] For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments ... NET

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

Verse 15 is most likely speaking of believers having a strong grasp of the truths of the gospel so as to be ready for action (cf. NASB, NCV, NKJV). Possibly a readiness to proclaim this gospel is in view (cf. CEV, GNT, NRSV).
Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .

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

**1Pet 1:4b–5** [Peter, to believers:] It is reserved in heaven for you, who by God’s power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

. . . God’s word; . . .

**Eph 6:17** And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The description of God’s word as “the sword of the Spirit” reflects its: power; offensive and defensive roles; spiritual nature; and importance to the work of the Holy Spirit. Note that the “helmet of salvation” may well have in view the hope of salvation (cf. 1Thes 5:8).

. . . and prayer

**Matt 6:13** [Prayer to God:] Don’t allow us to be tempted. Instead, rescue us from the evil one.

**Eph 6:18** Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God’s people.

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

What are “the burning arrows shot by the Evil One” (Eph 6:16) – and how does faith enable us to put them out?
How can we use God’s word as a sword (cf. Eph 6:17)?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What teachings in this study should spur us on to pray more?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
c) Counteraction of Demons

Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons

1Jn 4:1–3, 6 [John:] Dear friends, stop believing every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize God’s Spirit: Every spirit who acknowledges that Jesus the Messiah has come in the flesh is from God. 3 But every spirit who does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist. You have heard that he is coming, and now he is already in the world. ... 6 We belong to God. The person who knows God listens to us. Whoever does not belong to God does not listen to us. This is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit. ISV

In vv. 1–3, “spirit” refers to a spirit influencing a person. Having in view a particular heresy that was facing his readers, John indicates that they could tell if the spirit in a prophet (v. 1; CEV, GNT, NLT) is the Holy Spirit or an evil one by whether or not the prophet acknowledged Jesus Christ, in particular whether they acknowledged that he had come in the flesh. To do so would be indicative of the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment and conviction. Presumably this test for recognizing the Holy Spirit can be applied to other biblical truths about Jesus Christ (cf. 1Cor 12:3).

Additionally, one can infer from v. 6 that prophets or teachers who do not listen to the teachings of the apostles are not from God and are under the influence of evil spirits.

Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .

Mark 1:34, 39 So he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. But he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ... 39 So he went into all of Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. NET

. . . Jesus Christ gave some of his followers similar authority over demons

Mark 6:7, 13 He called the twelve disciples together and sent them out two by two. He gave them authority over the evil spirits ... 13 They
drove out many demons, and rubbed olive oil on many sick people and healed them. GNT

These verses show that Jesus gave his disciples authority over demons. They do not imply that this authority is necessarily given to all believers.

Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ’s “name”

**Acts 16:18** She [a girl with an evil spirit] continued to do this for many days. But Paul became greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out of her at once. NET

To do things in Jesus Christ’s “name” involves acting: as his representative; by his authority; and in accordance with his will. It involves acting in reliance on his power, by faith in him.

The Holy Spirit, faith and prayer also figure in the driving out of demons

**Matt 12:28** [Jesus:] But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already overtaken you. NET

**Matt 17:18–20** Then Jesus spoke sternly to the demon. It went out of the boy, and right then he was healed. 19 Later the disciples went to Jesus in private and asked him, “Why couldn’t we force out the demon?” 20–21 Jesus replied: It is because you don’t have enough faith! But I can promise you this. If you had faith no larger than a mustard seed, you could tell this mountain to move from here to there. And it would. Everything would be possible for you. CEV

**Mark 9:28–29** Then, after he [Jesus] went into the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we cast it out?” 29 He told them, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” NET
What indicators are there that someone may be demon-possessed?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

If you thought someone might be demon-possessed, what could you do about it?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Some people worry a lot about Satan and demons, while others are hardly concerned at all. How should we view them?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

In conjunction with engaging in spiritual warfare, we are not to engage in any ungodly spiritualistic practices, which ultimately involve cooperative interaction with demons and even Satan.

**Do not practice witchcraft or other occult practices**

**Deut 18:10–11** [Moses, to the Israelites:] *You must never sacrifice your sons or daughters by burning them alive, practice black magic, be a fortuneteller, witch, or sorcerer, “cast spells, ask ghosts or spirits for help, or consult the dead.*

**Do not consult anyone who does perform occult practices**

**Lev 19:31**A *Do not go for advice to people who consult the spirits of the dead.*

**Isa 47:13–14**A [God, to the Babylonians:] *You are powerless in spite of the advice you get. Let your astrologers come forward and save you—those people who study the stars, who map out the zones of the heavens and tell you from month to month what is going to happen to you. “They will be like bits of straw, and a fire will burn them up! They will not even be able to save themselves …*

**Do not have other “gods” or idols**

**Ex 20:2–6** [God, to the Israelites:] “I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 3”*You shall have no other gods before me. 4”*You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below. 5*You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me, 6*and showing covenant faithfulness to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
Other “gods” or idols are lifeless . . .

Ps 135:15–17  The nations’ idols are made of silver and gold, they are man–made. 16They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see, 17and ears, but cannot hear. Indeed, they cannot breathe. NET

. . . and so they are useless

1Sam 12:21  Idols are of no use, so don’t worship them. They can’t help you or save you. They are useless! NCV™

Worship of idols is correlated with worship of demons

1Cor 10:19–20  [Paul, to believers:] I do not mean that the food sacrificed to an idol is important. I do not mean that an idol is anything at all. 20But I say that what is sacrificed to idols is offered to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to share anything with demons. NCV™

Although idol worshipers may believe that they are offering sacrifices to an idol, they are in reality ultimately offering them to demons.

Having other “gods” is detrimental to our relationship with God

Deut 31:18  [God, referring to the Israelites:] On that day I will certainly turn away from them because of all the evil they’ve done in turning to other gods. GW

Having other “gods” will culminate in God’s retribution

Josh 24:20  [Joshua, to the Israelites:] If you abandon the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will turn against you; he will bring disaster on you and destroy you, though he once treated you well. NET

Note: Other “gods” and idolatry are not restricted to physical images

Phil 3:19  [Paul, speaking of enemies of the gospel:] Their destiny is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame. Their minds are set on worldly things. ISV

Here “belly” possibly is being used as a metaphor for “bodily desires” (GNT, cf. NCV). Regardless, Paul clearly has in view a mindset focused
on earthly or worldly things, making them one’s top priority, effectively one’s “god”.

**EPH 5:5** You may be sure that no one who is immoral, indecent, or greedy (for **greed is a form of idolatry**) will ever receive a share in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. **GNT**

Greedy people effectively put material things in the place of God. As such they are “serving a false god” (NCV).

Have you encountered witchcraft or other occult practices? How should we respond to such encounters – during and afterwards?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What forms of “gods” and idolatry are common in our society?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are you aware of anything which draws your devotion away from God? If so, what can you do about it?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Notes
Notes
Notes
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 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.

**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-Christians through to mature Christians, from teenagers to adults.

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