

Part H. Persevering

The **Bible** Unpacked

Foundations Study Series

The Bible's teaching condensed
for young believers

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 eight booklets in the series, based on the eight parts of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Foundations Edition*. Each booklet has five chapters, with questions added.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

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 out of Egypt 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.

For free downloads and information on other study series based on editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, go to: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

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?

36. Standing Firm

The Bible contains numerous exhortations to be faithful to God and to hold to the Christian faith. It is a persistent challenge for every Christian to do so, until the end. This chapter provides important insights and instructions on this topic, for every believer.

Be Faithful to God

Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[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.* 1 KINGS 8:61 GNT

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.* ACTS 11:23 GNT

Do not forget God

[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. ...* ¹⁸*You must remember the LORD your God ...* DEUTERONOMY 8:11, 18A NET

Persist until the End

Stand firm until the end

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *All people will hate you because you follow me, but those people who keep their faith until the end will be saved.* MATTHEW 10:22 NCV

Persist so that you will receive the reward

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

Be ready for Jesus Christ's return

So you, too, must be ready, because at an hour you are not expecting him the Son of Man will come." MATTHEW 24:44 ISV

Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

Resist Satan

Be on your guard and stay awake. *Your enemy, the devil, is like a roaring lion, sneaking around to find someone to attack.* ⁹But you must resist the devil and stay strong in your faith. 1 PETER 5:8–9 CEV

Use spiritual weapons and armor

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.* ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, ... EPHESIANS 6:13–15 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. Possibly a readiness to proclaim this gospel is in view. (Note that other spiritual weapons follow.)

Have Faith

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. EPHESIANS 6:16 GNT

Use God's word

Accept God's salvation as your helmet, and *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* EPHESIANS 6:17 NCV

Pray

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

What challenges do you face in remaining faithful to God? What advice could you give to someone facing similar challenges?

What things motivate you to persist in the faith?

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

Some people worry a lot about Satan, while others are not concerned at all. How should we view him?

Choose one of the things mentioned in the spiritual weapons and armor listed and say how it does or could help you in spiritual warfare.

37. Rejecting Sin

The Bible does not merely tell us not to sin. As this chapter shows, the Bible gives practical instruction on how to deal with any sin that we have done – and also on how to avoid sin in future.

Dealing with Sin

Be sorrowful over your sin

The sacrifice God wants is a broken spirit. God, you will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry for sin. PSALMS 51:17 NCV

Confess your sin to God

[NEHEMIAH, TO GOD:] *I confess the sins that we Israelites have committed against you as well as the sins that my father's family and I have committed.* NEHEMIAH 1:6B GW

Ask God for forgiveness and restoration

[DAVID, TO GOD AFTER COMMITTING TERRIBLE SIN:] *Turn your face from my sins and wipe out all my guilt. ¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, God, and make my spirit right again.* PSALMS 51:9–10 NCV

Avoiding Sin

Ask God for help to avoid sin

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Don't let me do wrong on purpose, Lord, or let sin have control over my life. Then I will be innocent, and not guilty of some terrible fault.* PSALMS 19:13 CEV

For God will help us withstand temptation

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and he will show you how to escape from your temptations.* 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 CEV

Use God's word to avoid sin

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *I treasure your word above all else; it keeps me from sinning against you.* PSALMS 119:11 CEV

Avoid sinful desires

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to *keep away from fleshly desires that do battle against the soul, ...*
1 PETER 2:11 NET

Alternatives to Sin

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

God did this [sent Jesus to deal with sin] so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who *live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature.* ROMANS 8:4 GNT

Living by the Holy Spirit involves: focusing on what he wants; paying attention to his promptings; and relying on his power.

Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But now you have been set free from sin and are the slaves of God. Your gain is a life fully dedicated to him, and the result is eternal life.* ROMANS 6:22 GNT

One of the most effective measures against sinning is to be busy doing good – as is the case when one lives as a slave to God.

Be Holy

We are to be holy, as God is holy

[GOD:] *“You must be holy, because I am holy.”* 1 PETER 1:14–16 ISV

Be set apart for God

[GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Therefore separate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God.* LEVITICUS 20:7 ISV

What should we do about sin that we have committed?

How does God’s word help us to avoid sin?

Explain in your own words what it means to “live according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4)?

How does being preoccupied with doing what is right - living as a slave to God - help us to avoid sin? What right or good things could you be more focused on doing?

What is involved in being holy?

38. Major Pitfalls

The “pitfalls” spoken of in this chapter are: pride, riches and sexual sin. These are three of the greatest dangers to one’s life as a believer. It is essential that we take to heart the Bible’s teaching about them.

Pride

Do not be proud or conceited

Don’t be proud and feel that you are smarter than others. Make friends with ordinary people. ROMANS 12:16B CEV

Do not be wise in your own eyes

How horrible it will be for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever. ISAIAH 5:21 GW

Instead of being proud, be humble

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* 1 PETER 5:5B NET

Riches

Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” ... ²⁵*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.* MARK 10:23, 25 NET

Riches are not secure

Tell those who have the riches of this world ... *not to place their confidence in anything as uncertain as riches.* 1 TIMOTHY 6:17A GW

Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

[JESUS:] *But how horrible it will be for those who are rich. They have had their comfort.* LUKE 6:24 GW

So, do not love money and be content with what you have

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.” HEBREWS 13:5 GNT

Sexual Sin

Avoid sexual sin

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But there must be no sexual sin among you, or any kind of evil or greed. Those things are not right for God’s holy people.* EPHESIANS 5:3 NCV

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses brought in a woman who had been caught in bed with a man who wasn’t her husband. They made her stand in the middle of the crowd. ⁴Then they said, “Teacher, this woman was caught sleeping with a man who isn’t her husband. ... ⁷They kept on asking Jesus about the woman. Finally, he stood up and said, “If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!” ⁸Once again he bent over and began writing on the ground. ⁹The people left one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally, Jesus and the woman were there alone. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and asked her, “Where is everyone? Isn’t there anyone left to accuse you?” ¹¹“No sir,” the woman answered. Then Jesus told her, “I am not going to accuse you either. *You may go now, but don’t sin anymore.*” JOHN 8:3–4, 7–11 CEV

Sexual sin results in God’s judgment

[GOD, TO JOHN:] *But I will tell you what will happen to cowards and to everyone who is unfaithful or dirty-minded or who murders or is sexually immoral or uses witchcraft or worships idols or tells lies. They will be thrown into that lake of fire and burning sulfur. This is the second death.* REVELATION 21:8 CEV

Why is pride so bad?

How does one "be humble"? What attitudes and actions does it involve?

How do riches form a barrier to our relationship with God?

How can we avoid loving money?

In what ways is sexual sin detrimental to oneself?

39. Hard Times

Hard times are experienced by all Christians. This reality is reflected in the Bible. But the Bible also shows that there are a number of practical and effective things that we can do when undergoing hard times – the most prominent of which is praying.

Trust and Wait For God

Trust in God

[DAVID, TO GOD:] I have heard the slander of many; It is like terror all around me, as they conspire together and plot to take my life. ¹⁴*But I trust in you, O LORD. I say, “You are my God.”* ¹⁵*My times are in your hands. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies and from those who pursue me.* PSALMS 31:13–15 ISV

The statement: “You are my God” (v. 14), implies that the LORD is the one David trusts as being in control of his life, the one who held his present and future circumstances in his hands (v. 15a).

Take refuge in God

The one who lives in the shelter of the Most High and who abides in the shadow of the Almighty ²will say to the LORD, “You are my refuge, my fortress, and my God in whom I trust!” PSALMS 91:1–2 ISV

Wait for God

Wait patiently for the LORD! Wait confidently for him! PSALMS 37:7A NET

Take comfort in God’s word

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *When I suffer, this comforts me: Your promise gives me life. ... ⁵²I remember your laws from long ago, and they comfort me, LORD.* PSALMS 119:50, 52 NCV

In v. 50 the psalmist speaks of God’s promise renewing his life, through the hope that it gives.

Pray in Hard Times

Pour out your heart to God

O people, in every situation put your trust in him; *pour out your heart before him*; for God is a refuge for us. **PSALMS 62:8 ISV**

Cry out to God for help

[DAVID:] *In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried out to my God. From his heavenly temple he heard my voice; he listened to my cry for help.* **PSALMS 18:6 NET**

Persist in prayer to God

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *LORD God, my saviour, I cry out all day, and at night I come before you.* **PSALMS 88:1 GNT**

Praise and thank God amidst trouble

Then [Jehoshaphat] *he chose men to be singers to the LORD, to praise him because he is holy and wonderful. As they marched in front of the army, they said, "Thank the LORD, because his love continues forever."*
²²*As 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.* **2 CHRONICLES 20:21B–22 NCV**

God in Our Hard Times

God is near us in hard times

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, and he saves those whose spirits have been crushed. **PSALMS 34:18 NCV**

God comforts us in hard times

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our suffering, so that we may be able to comfort others in all their suffering, since we ourselves are being comforted by God.* **2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4 ISV**

What is involved in trusting in God during hard times?

How does God's word provide comfort during hard times?

What is meant by "pour out your heart" to God (cf. Psalms 62:8)? How does doing this help in suffering?

Apart from God's response, how does persisting in prayer benefit a suffering person - both during the suffering and afterwards?

What is one thing mentioned (or perhaps a verse) that you ought to keep in mind when facing hard times? How would it help you?

40. Persecution

The Bible warns that faithfully following God inevitably results in persecution and difficulties. But as this chapter shows, it also provides practical teaching on what to do when faced with persecution – and even gives reasons to rejoice.

Have Faith in God

Trust in God

[PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS AT CORINTH:] My friends, I want you to know what a hard time we had in Asia. *Our sufferings were so horrible and so unbearable that death seemed certain.* ⁹*In fact, we felt sure that we were going to die. But this made us stop trusting in ourselves and start trusting God, who raises the dead to life.* ¹⁰*God saved us from the threat of death, and we are sure that he will do it again and again.*

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8B–10 CEV

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹*Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.* ³⁰*Even all the hairs on your head are numbered.* ³¹*So do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.* MATTHEW 10:28–31 NET

Pray to God, asking for help

[THE EARLY BELIEVERS:] *And now, Lord, listen to their threats. Lord, help us, your servants, to speak your word without fear.* ³⁰*Help us to be brave by showing us your power to heal. Give proofs and make miracles happen by the power of Jesus, your holy servant.* ACTS 4:29–30 NCV

Note that the believers' prayer was for God to work through them during their persecution, rather than simply for God to stop the persecution.

Be Faithful to God

Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS CHRIST, TO BELIEVERS:] Don't be afraid of anything you are about to suffer. Listen! The Devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison, and your troubles will last ten days. *Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory.* REVELATION 2:10 GNT

Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering

[THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne. ³Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up.* HEBREWS 12:2–3 GNT

Rejoice in Persecution

Rejoice because trials develop Christian character

[JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.* JAMES 1:2–4 ISV

Rejoice because of rewards for enduring persecution

How blessed are you whenever people hate you, avoid you, insult you, and slander you because of the Son of Man! ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven is great! LUKE 6:22–23A ISV

What kinds of persecution, if any, have you faced because of your faith?

Choose a blessing of enduring persecution and difficulties – not necessarily from this chapter – that you can particularly relate to. Say why you chose it.

What attitude and actions should be part of our response to those who persecute us?

When facing persecution and difficulties, how could you bring yourself to rejoice?

Believers in some countries face intense persecution. What obligations do we have to them as fellow believers? How can we support them?

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4. The Holy Spirit
5. Angels, Demons and Satan

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37. Spurning Sin
38. Major Pitfalls
39. Hard Times
40. 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.



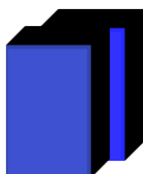
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Supporting Persecuted Christians

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

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

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.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 – sb.od.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.au

It provides weekly bulletins. Send a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

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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