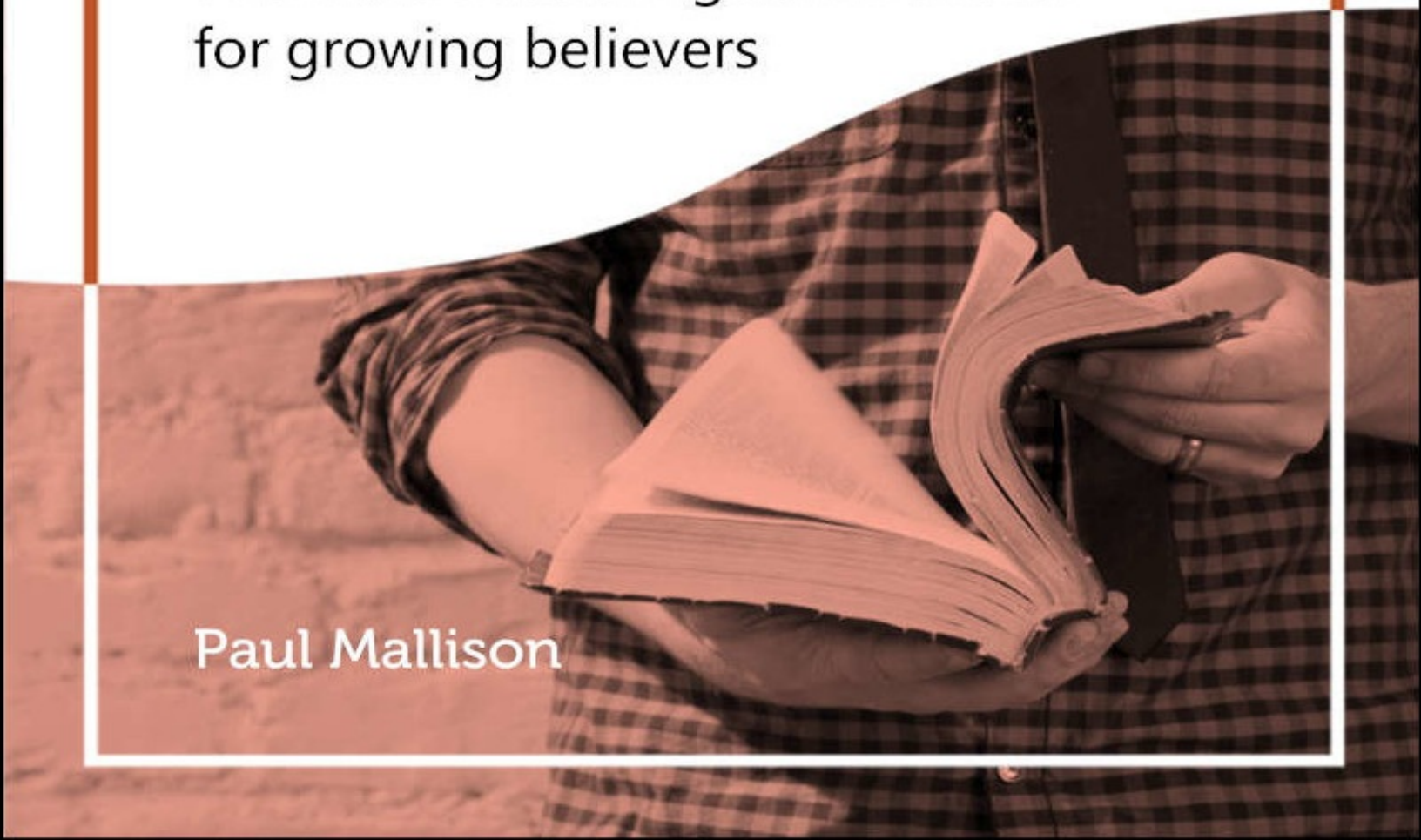
The Bible *Unpacked*

Intermediate Edition

The Bible's teaching summarised for growing believers



Paul Mallison

Questions for Bible Studies included

The Bible Unpacked

Intermediate Edition

The Bible's teaching summarized
for growing believers

Featuring the *NET Bible* with other translations

Paul Mallison

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This work is dedicated to the members of the persecuted church, faithful to Jesus Christ.

Users are asked to pray regularly for persecuted Christians and, if possible, support them financially. These things can be done through organizations that provide both aid to them and prayer notices, such as those listed at the following link.

www.thebibleunpacked.net/persecuted-christians

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Foreword

Overview

The aim of this book is to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order, using the Bible itself – i.e. verses taken from the Bible. The structure provides a practical framework for assimilating the Bible's teachings. *Volume I: What to Know* covers basically the same themes as a theological text. *Volume II: What to Do* is more like a manual or a "practical theology" text – mainly giving directions on how to relate to God and to other people.

Each chapter is divided into two parts. Both of these parts contain major sections, which in turn contain a number of subheadings. The subheadings give key Bible teachings. They are each followed by a related verse/s. The parts of the verses that the subheadings reflect are in italics. Occasionally a heading or a verse is followed by a comment.

The Selection of Verses

All the editions (cf. *The Seven Editions*) are essentially abbreviated versions of the *In-Depth Edition*. In that edition each subheading was derived from the common theme of the verses following it. As such, the subheadings are based on groups of verses with a common theme, rather than the verses being selected to support the subheadings.

Contemplating Verses and Checking Context

Much care has been taken to interpret the verses both in the context of the passage that they are from and in the light of Scripture as a whole. Nevertheless, if you have doubts about the usage of a verse then:

- read the section in the Bible from which it is taken, and consider how it is used in its context. For this purpose, the Bible reference immediately preceding each passage contains a link to the passage in its chapter at biblia.com.
- consider how the verse fits in with Scripture as a whole. (For example, interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching.)
- read commentaries on the verse and its passage.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations for books of the Bible are standard ones.

“OT” is used for “Old Testament” and “NT” for “New Testament”.

Abbreviations denoting Bible translations are identified on the copyright notices page, at the beginning of this book.

Note that occasionally “. . .” appears at the end of a subheading and at the beginning of the following one. This indicates that the teaching in the second subheading’s verses follows on closely from that of the first.

Bible Study Questions

As mentioned above, each chapter is divided into two parts, both of which contain major sections. In the *Intermediate Edition*, at the end of the two parts is a link to a few questions pertaining to the part.

The questions are just suggested questions. Users who download the files of the online version to use off-line, may edit or delete any of these questions and/or add their own questions (in the html files that are downloaded).

Before each set of questions is the heading of the (major) section to which the

questions belong. These headings are hyperlinks back to the sections.

Endorsements

Note that some of the following endorsements are for *The Bible Unpacked* series in general or for editions other than this one.

The author has done a great job in collecting and arranging texts under doctrinal and practical headings.

Dr Paul Barnett, Bishop and noted author

I highly recommend "The Bible Unpacked" for its use both in evangelism and helping people grow in their Christian faith.

Dr Peter Ralphs, Former Principal of Bible College of Queensland

Paul Mallison has compiled an excellent resource for the seeker through to mature Christians.

Glyn Henman, CEO of Young Life Australia

I am a big fan of the Intermediate level one. I carry it everywhere with me.

Gary Irvine, YWAM Leader

About the Author

Paul Mallison has a BA Dip Ed from Macquarie University, Sydney. He has spent most of his working life teaching students from a cross section of ages and backgrounds. In his work he has composed numerous teaching materials.

Paul is a son of best-selling Australian author and international educator, the late Rev. Dr John Mallison. He is credited with extensive work on the final draft of

the last two of his father’s 20 published books.

He considers the theology of his *The Bible Unpacked* material to be “evangelical”. As for a statement of faith, he adheres to the Apostle’s Creed.

Paul lives in Sydney, Australia.

Tips on Using This Resource

Colored Headings as Links

Any colored heading is a hyperlink, not just blue headings. There are numerous links to and from headings in the text, as follows.

- There are hyperlinks in the *Contents* to each of the 8 units and 40 chapters. Additionally, there are hyperlinks at the start of each major section to the headings in the text that follows.
- Each heading in the text is a hyperlink to the corresponding heading in a list of all the headings – which are in turn hyperlinks back to the headings. In the online versions, these lists of headings occur at the bottom of each page in the main text. In the ebook versions, the lists in the *All Headings* section are used.
- The *Major Headings* section contains lists of the major headings for each of the 8 units. These are hyperlinks to the major headings in the text.
- The *All Headings* section contains lists of all headings for each of the 40 chapters. These are hyperlinks to the headings in the text.

Cross-References

There are cross references to other headings in the text. These can occur at the start of chapters, parts, sections and subheadings. These are blue and so obviously are hyperlinks.

The arrows ⇑ and ⇓ occur immediately after verse references in some comments and cross references, e.g. Ex 40:38 ⇑; Ex 13:21 ⇓. These are cross referencing the referred-to verse in the previous or following subsection respectively.

Links to Bible Websites

To enable quick checking of a passage's biblical context, the reference at the start of a passage is a hyperlink to the first verse in the passage in its chapter on a Bible website. For the *In-Depth Edition*, in which all verses are from the *English Standard Version*, this is the ESV Bible website. For other editions, which use verses from various translations, this is biblia.com.

As *The NET Bible* is the most commonly used translation in the editions other than the *In-Depth Edition*, the verses will display on biblia.com using *The NET Bible*. However, biblia.com has numerous other translations that the user can easily change the verses to.

Index Links

The *Scripture Index* and the *Subject Index* have hyperlinks under the verses and topics listed, to the verses and topics in the text.

These links refer to the section that the verse or topic appears, rather than page numbers. For example, 12.II.C refers to Chapter 12, Part II, Section C.

Some of the links in the *Subject Index* are bold. This denotes that the link is to a major heading.

Pray for persecuted Christians

Volume I

What to Know

A. God and Spiritual Powers

B. God and the World: Basics

C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

D. God and His Own People

Unit 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

Chapter 1

God's Being

I. Basics

A. God's Form

B. God's Glory

C. God's Personhood

D. God's Eternity

II. God's Pre-Eminence

A. God's Greatness

B. God's Power

C. God's Knowledge and Wisdom

D. God's Name

Part I

Basics

The concepts in the first half of this chapter are fundamental to understanding what God is like, as they concern basic attributes of his being. These include attributes which show God to be very different to us, but also attributes which indicate that he is like us in that he is a personal being.

Section A

God's Form

God is one

[Jesus, quoting Moses:] Listen, Israel, *the Lord our God, the Lord is one. …*
32The expert in the law said to him, *"That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that he is one,* and there is no one else besides him. Mark 12:29b, 32 NET

God is a single entity. He is only one being.

God is spirit

God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24 NET

God's nature is spirit; he is a spiritual being. So God is not a physical being, in contrast to people and particularly to idols.

God cannot be seen by people

[Paul, speaking of God:] He alone has endless life and lives in inaccessible light. *No one has ever seen him, nor can anyone see him.* Honor and eternal power belong to him! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16 ISV

God is everywhere

"I am a God who is near," says the LORD. "I am also a God who is far away."
24 *"No one can hide where I cannot see him," says the LORD. "I fill all of heaven and earth," says the LORD.* Jeremiah 23:23-24 NCV™

Note that "LORD" is the personal name of God.

Section B
God's Glory

The Bible often speaks of God's glory in reference to his wondrous being. In doing so, it has in view God's essence and/or his attributes. Regarding his essence, God's glory pertains to his essential being itself, such that his presence is on occasions perceived as his glory and spoken of in terms of it. Regarding his attributes, God's glory emanates in part from his attributes – such as his power – which in a sense reflect the glory of God's essence and presence.

Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God

They [kings] will sing about the ways of the LORD, for *great is the glory of the LORD!* Psalms 138:5 ISV

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Romans 3:23 CEV

The fact that it is God's glory that people are measured by or compared

to, underlines that glory is a key attribute of God.

God's glory manifests his presence

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and *saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*. Acts 7:55 NET

Here "the glory of God" is correlated with "God" himself – and so God's presence.

In association with his glory, God is surrounded by brilliant light

[Ezekiel, describing a vision of God:] I then saw what looked like a throne made of sapphire, and sitting on the throne was a figure in the shape of a human. **27**From the waist up, it was glowing like metal in a hot furnace, and from the waist down it looked like the flames of a fire. *The figure was surrounded by a bright light,* **28***as colorful as a rainbow that appears after a storm. I realized I was seeing the brightness of the LORD's glory!* Ezekiel 1:26-28a CEV

God's glory is evidenced by the universe that he has made

The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork. Psalms 19:1 NET

Section C
God's Personhood

God is not a "thing" but a personal being with who we can interrelate.

God has a mind – knowing and understanding things

For *the LORD is a God who knows; he evaluates what people do*. 1 Samuel 2:3b NET

[David:] And you, Solomon my son, obey the God of your father and serve him with a submissive attitude and a willing spirit, for *the LORD examines all minds and understands every motive of one's thoughts*. 1 Chronicles 28:9a NET

God has a will

[Paul, to believers:] In the Messiah we were also chosen when we were predestined according to the purpose of the one [God] *who does everything according to the intention of his will, …* Ephesians 1:11 ISV

God has feelings and character

But *the LORD God felt sorry for his people*, and instead of destroying the temple, he sent prophets who warned the people over and over about their sins. 2 Chronicles 36:15 CEV

You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen the Lord's purpose, that *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy*. James 5:11b NET

God communicates

After *God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets,* [2]*in these last days he has spoken to us in a son,* whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. Hebrews 1:1-2 NET

God interacts with people, responding to their needs

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. James 4:8a NET

[God, speaking of a person devoted to him:] *When he calls out to me, I will answer him. I will be with him when he is in trouble; I will rescue him and bring him honor.* Psalms 91:15 NET

Section D
God's Eternity

God has always been alive, the first of all things

Your throne, O LORD, has been firm from the beginning, and you existed before time began. Psalms 93:2 GNT

This is what the LORD, Israel's king, says, their protector, the LORD who commands armies: "*I am the first* and I am the last, there is no God but me. Isaiah 44:6 NET

God will live forever

[King Nebuchadnezzar:] I extolled the Most High, and *I praised and glorified the one who lives forever. For his authority is an everlasting authority, and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next.* Daniel 4:34b NET

[Paul, speaking of God:] Now to *the eternal king, immortal*, invisible, the only God, *be honor and glory forever and ever!* Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17 NET

God transcends time

Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that *a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day*. 2 Peter 3:8 NET

God dwells outside of the limitations of time, not bound by its finite

perspective. From his eternal perspective, diverse periods such as a day and a thousand years are both small, even insignificant. To God the distinction between them is merely relative.

God is self-existing

For as *the Father has life in himself*, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. John 5:26 ESV

God does not change

All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change*. James 1:17 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

God's Pre-Eminence

See also:

- [God's] Holiness

A failure of many of us in the church today is that we have an inadequate view of God, failing to fully appreciate his pre-eminence. All Christians need to understand and be mindful of God's surpassing greatness and incomparable capabilities – notably his power, knowledge and wisdom.

Section A

God's Greatness

God is great and awesome

[Moses, to the Israelites:] For *the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God* who is unbiased and takes no bribe, … Deuteronomy 10:17 NET

God is greater than all others

[Jesus:] *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all*, and no one can snatch them from my Father's hand. John 10:29 NET

There is no one like God

[Jeremiah:] *No one is like you, O LORD. You are great. Your name is powerful.*
[7]Everyone fears you, O King of the Nations. This is what you deserve. *No one is*

like you among all the wise people in the nations in all their kingdoms. Jeremiah 10:6-7 GW

God is beyond our comprehension

Yes, God is great – beyond our knowledge! The number of his years is unsearchable. Job 36:26 NET

Can you discover the essence of God? Can you find out the perfection of the Almighty? **8***It is higher than the heavens – what can you do? It is deeper than Sheol – what can you know?* **9***Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* Job 11:7-9 NET

The extent of God's being and attributes are far beyond our understanding.

Section B
God's Power

God's power is incomparable and unlimited

He [Jehoshaphat] prayed: "O LORD God of our ancestors, you are the God who lives in heaven and *rules over all the kingdoms of the nations. You possess strength and power; no one can stand against you*. 2 Chronicles 20:6 NET

[Paul, speaking of God:] You will also know *the unlimited greatness of his power as it works with might and strength* for us, the believers. Ephesians 1:19 GW

God can do all things – nothing is too hard

[Job, to God:] I know that *you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours*

can be thwarted. Job 42:2 ESV

[The angel Gabriel, to Mary:] Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. **37***Nothing is impossible for God!* Luke 1:36-37 CEV

God performs awesome deeds

[Isaiah, to God:] When *you performed awesome deeds that took us by surprise*, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. Isaiah 64:3 NET

Section C
God's Knowledge and Wisdom

God knows everything

God is greater than our conscience and *knows all things*. 1 John 3:20b NET

God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do

The LORD watches from heaven; *he sees all people*. **14**From the place where he lives *he looks carefully at all the earth's inhabitants*. **15**He is the one who forms every human heart, *and takes note of all their actions*. Psalms 33:13-15 NET

God knows people's minds

This is what the LORD says: '*This is what you are thinking, O house of Israel; I know what goes through your minds*. Ezekiel 11:5b NET

God knows the future

[God, to Israel:] *From the beginning I revealed the end. From long ago I told you things that had not yet happened*, saying, "My plan will stand, and I'll do everything I intended to do." Isaiah 46:10 GW

God has incredible wisdom

Our Lord is great and has awesome power; *there is no limit to his wisdom*. Psalms 147:5 NET

Section D
God's Name

God declared his name to be the "LORD"

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with Moses, and *the LORD called out his name: the LORD*. Exodus 34:5 NCV™

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and *they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"* **14***God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* **15***God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD,* the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, *has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.* Exodus 3:13-15 ESV

> "LORD" (v. 15) can be derived from "I AM" (v. 14). For the actual Hebrew that is rendered as "LORD" is "YHWH" (most likely pronounced "Yahweh") and it "is derived from the verb *HAYAH*, *to be"* (NASB text note) to which "I AM" is also related. Note that "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14)

may well have the sense: “I will be who I will be”. This title and its shortened form “I AM” (v. 14) appear to express God’s unchanging nature, self-existence, self-determination and omnipresence.

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 2

God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics

A. Holiness

B. Righteousness

C. Faithfulness

D. Anger

II. Loving Characteristics

A. Love

B. Mercy

C. Goodness

D. Jealousy

Part I

Holy Characteristics

A good understanding of God requires a balanced understanding of his character, including the fundamental attribute of holiness. We need to "take to heart" all aspects of his character. As well as the many characteristics that we find consoling, we also need to appreciate those that inspire godly fear.

Section A
Holiness

God's holiness involves his moral purity. It concerns God's separateness from and his intolerance of that which is morally impure. Holiness is fundamental to the other characteristics that follow in the first half of this chapter.

God is holy

And one [angelic being] called to another and said: "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts*; the whole earth is full of his glory!" Isaiah 6:3 ESV

> Note that the title "the LORD of hosts" points to God's sovereign power over all things.

There is nothing bad in God . . .

[A psalmist:] They will say that the LORD is good. He is my Rock, and *there is no wrong in him*. Psalms 92:15 NCV™

. . . God cannot tolerate evil

[Habakkuk, to God:] *You are too just to tolerate evil; you are unable to condone wrongdoing.* Habakkuk 1:13a NET

God shows himself to be holy by what he does

The LORD All-Powerful will receive glory by judging fairly; *the holy God will show himself holy by doing what is right.* Isaiah 5:16 NCV™

There is no one holy like God

No one is holy like the LORD! There is no one other than you! There is no rock like our God! 1 Samuel 2:2 NET

Section B
Righteousness

God is righteous and just

But *the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.* Isaiah 5:16 ESV

All God does is right and just

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for *all his deeds are right and his ways are just.* Daniel 4:37a NET

God is truthful

[God:] *I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.* Isaiah 45:19b ESV

God does not show favoritism

For *there is no partiality with God*. Romans 2:11 NET

Section C
Faithfulness

God is faithful

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;
[23]they are new every morning; *great is your faithfulness*. Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV

God never forsakes nor fails

[David, to God:] Your loyal followers trust in you, for *you, LORD, do not abandon those who seek your help*. Psalms 9:10 NET

David also said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and brave, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, because the LORD God, my God, is with you. *He will not fail you or leave you* until all the work for the Temple of the LORD is finished. 1 Chronicles 28:20 NCV™

God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

God is no mere human! *He doesn’t tell lies or change his mind. God always keeps his promises.* Numbers 23:19 CEV

Section D

Anger

Although we usually view anger in a negative light, this is not how the Bible depicts God's anger, or wrath. God's anger is always justified and righteous, consistent with his holiness. Moreover, it occurs in response to that which is contrary to his holiness. Unlike human anger, God's anger is never uncontrolled, wayward or spasmodic – and is tempered by his mercy, notably where his own people are concerned.

God expresses anger, which has awesome consequences

[A psalmist, to God:] *Who can really fathom the intensity of your anger? Your raging fury causes people to fear you.* Psalms 90:11 NET

Therefore [due to their evil] *the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.* Isaiah 5:25 ESV

God is slow to anger and often holds it back

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in loyal love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty … Numbers 14:18a NET

Yet he is compassionate. He forgives sin and does not destroy. *He often holds back his anger, and does not stir up his fury.* Psalms 78:38 NET

God does not stay angry

He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. Micah 7:18b NKJV

God’s anger arises in response to sin and disobedience

[God, to Baasha the king of Israel:] Yet you followed in Jeroboam’s footsteps and encouraged my people Israel to sin; *their sins have made me angry*.
1 Kings 16:2b NET

[God:] *I will angrily seek vengeance on the nations that do not obey me.* Micah 5:15 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Loving Characteristics

God's love is one of the two primary characteristics from which his other personal characteristics emanate, the other primary one being his holiness. Comprehending and persistently being mindful of God's love and his associated characteristics provides great encouragement for believers.

Section A

Love

God is love – as shown in him giving his only Son, to save us

The person who does not love does not know God, because *God is love.* **9***This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent his unique Son into the world so that we might live through him.* **10***This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* … **16**We have come to know and rely on the love that God has for us. *God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*
1 John 4:8-10, 16 ISV

> The phrase "God is love" (vv. 8, 16) implies that God's nature is fundamentally love, rather than that love is simply a characteristic of God. It is also suggests that God is the sole source of love and so that love does not exist apart from him.

God's love is great

[David, to God:] For *your loyal love extends beyond the sky*, and your faithfulness reaches the clouds. Psalms 108:4 NET

God's love is constant

How precious, O God, is your constant love! Psalms 36:7a GNT

God's love lasts forever

[Ethan, to God:] I know that *your love will last for all time*, that your faithfulness is as permanent as the sky. Psalms 89:2 GNT

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for *his steadfast love endures forever*. Psalms 136:1 ESV

Section B
Mercy

God is merciful

[Moses, to Israel:] *The LORD your God is a merciful God.* He will not abandon you, destroy you, or forget the promise to your ancestors that he swore he would keep. Deuteronomy 4:31 GW

[David, to God:] Because of *your great mercy*, I come to your house, LORD … Psalms 25:6a CEV

God is also compassionate

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on his faithful followers. Psalms 103:13 NET

Due to his mercy and compassion, God is long-suffering

[Levites, praying to God and making reference to their ancestors:] Then, when they were at rest again, they went back to doing evil before you. Then you abandoned them to their enemies, and they gained dominion over them. *When they again cried out to you, in your compassion you heard from heaven and rescued them time and again.* **29**And you solemnly admonished them in order to return them to your law, but they behaved presumptuously and did not obey your commandments. They sinned against your ordinances – those by which an individual, if he obeys them, will live. They boldly turned from you; they rebelled and did not obey. **30***You prolonged your kindness with them for many years*, and you solemnly admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. Still they paid no attention, so you delivered them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. **31***However, due to your abundant mercy you did not do away with them altogether; you did not abandon them. For you are a merciful and compassionate God.* Nehemiah 9:28-31 NET

Due to his mercy and compassion, God is forgiving

Who is a God like you? *You forgive sin and overlook the rebellion of your faithful people. You will not be angry forever, because you would rather show mercy.* **19***You will again have compassion on us. You will overcome our wrongdoing. You will throw all our sins into the deep sea.* Micah 7:18-19 GW

Section C
Goodness

God is good

[A psalmist, to God:] *You are good and you do good.* Psalms 119:68a NET

God exercises kindness

How can I repay the LORD for all his acts of kindness to me? Psalms 116:12 NET

God is generous

Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask *God, who gives to everyone generously* without a rebuke, and it will be given to him. James 1:5 ISV

Section D
Jealousy

The Hebrew and Greek words translated as “jealousy” convey a very forceful passion. When used of God, “jealousy” is spoken of in a positive light, as a virtuous attribute aligned with his profound commitment to and love for his people.

God’s jealousy in regard to his people is comparable to that of a husband or wife. Their jealousy is a product of their intense love for each other and evoked by anything that poses a threat to their relationship. As such God’s jealousy is expressed in action against whatever threatens his people or his relationship with them. Thus it is expressed both against hostile forces – bringing salvation to his people – and in punishing any unfaithfulness of his people, leading them back to him.

God is a jealous God

[Moses, to Israel:] For the LORD your God is a consuming fire; *he is a jealous God*. Deuteronomy 4:24 NET

Here God's jealousy is compared to fire devouring or destroying that which has aroused it.

God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin

Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD. *They made him more jealous by their sins than their ancestors had done.* 1 Kings 14:22 NET

God is also jealous for his people's well-being

Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. **3**Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. **4**Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. **5**And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Zechariah 8:2-5 ESV

God's jealousy for Zion (v. 2) – i.e. Jerusalem - has in view her restoration (vv. 3-5; cf. GNT) and expressing wrath towards her enemies (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT).

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 3

Jesus Christ

I. General

A. Jesus Christ's Eternity

B. Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence

C. Jesus Christ's Character

D. Jesus Christ's Name

II. Jesus Christ and God

A. Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

B. Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

C. Jesus Christ Is Identified with God

D. Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

E. Jesus Christ Is Under God's Authority

Part I

General

The NT makes remarkable claims about aspects of Jesus Christ's being and his character. In doing so it shows Jesus Christ's nature to mirror that of God, and so points to his deity (his "God nature"). The NT also often refers to Jesus Christ's "name", making it a further concept that is important to grasp.

Section A
Jesus Christ's Eternity

Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .

[John, to believers:] I am writing to you, fathers, because you know *him who has existed from the beginning*. 1 John 2:13a GNT

Jesus Christ existed in the beginning, before all time.

. . . Jesus Christ was before all things

[Jesus, to God:] And now, Father, glorify me at your side with *the glory I had with you before the world was created*. John 17:5 NET

Jesus Christ will be alive forever

But because *Jesus lives forever, he will never stop serving as priest.* **25***So he is able always to save those who come to God through him because he always lives,* asking God to help them. Hebrews 7:24-25 NCV™

Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is “the life”

For as the Father has life in himself, so *he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.* John 5:26 ESV

Jesus said to her, *“I am the resurrection and the life.* The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. John 11:25 ISV

> Descriptions of Jesus Christ as “the life” reflect the fact that he has life inherent (cf. 5:26 ↑) as part of his essential nature, and as such is self-existing. Primarily they point to Jesus Christ as the source of life – the one who gives life – as the latter part of this verse suggests.

Jesus Christ remains the same

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever! Hebrews 13:8 NET

Section B
Jesus Christ’s Pre-Eminence

See also:

- Jesus Christ as Lord of All

Jesus Christ is greater than all things

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, **16***for all things in heaven and on earth were created by him* – all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers – *all things were created through him and for him.* **17***He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.* **18***He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself*

may become first in all things. Colossians 1:15-18 NET

Jesus Christ has divine glory

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Matthew 25:31 NET

Note that "the Son of Man" was the title Jesus used for himself the most. It is a messianic title, but it also underlines his humanity.

Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power

[Paul, to believers:] But our citizenship is in heaven – and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21**who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of *that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.* Philippians 3:20-21 NET

Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom

[The disciples, to Jesus:] Now *we know that you know everything …* John 16:30 NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] For *I will give you the words along with the wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.* Luke 21:15 NET

Christ has wisdom superior to that of any adversary that we face.

Jesus Christ is everywhere

So Jesus came down, and he is the same One who went up above all the sky. *Christ did that to fill everything with his presence.* Ephesians 4:10 NCV™

Section C
Jesus Christ's Character

See also:

- Jesus Christ's Personality

Jesus Christ is holy and righteous

[Believers, to God:] Then they turned against *your holy Servant Jesus*, your chosen Messiah. Acts 4:27 CEV

[John, to believers:] But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, *Jesus Christ the righteous One*, … 1 John 2:1b NET

Jesus Christ is faithful

But *the Lord is faithful*, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 2 Thessalonians 3:3 NET

Jesus Christ is loving

[Paul, to believers:] And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to *understand the greatness of Christ's love—how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is.* **19***Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know*, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:18-19 NCV™

Section D
Jesus Christ's Name

In biblical times, a person's name represented their whole person – including their nature, authority and significance or purpose. This concept is in view in references to the "name" of a person.

Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself

For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses *all who call on him*. **13**For *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* will be saved. Romans 10:12-13 NET

> These verses illustrate that the "name" of Jesus Christ signifies or embodies Jesus Christ himself by the use of the equivalent phrases "call on him" (v. 12) and "calls on the name of the Lord" (v. 13).

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Jesus Christ and God

The claim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is one of the most central teachings in the NT. Additionally, the NT says much that associates Christ with God. This teaching forms the basis of a large portion of what distinguishes Christianity from other religions.

Section A

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .

Therefore since we [believers] have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God*, let us hold fast to our confession. Hebrews 4:14 NET

. . . Jesus Christ is God's only Son

God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 1 John 4:9b NET

Jesus Christ is the image of God

… the glorious gospel of *Christ, who is the image of God*. 2 Corinthians 4:4b NET

> The assertion that Jesus Christ is the image of God – having the nature and fullness of God (as per the following subsection) – reflects and supports the assertion that he is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God

[Paul, to believers:] You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, **6**who though *he existed in the form of God* did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, … Philippians 2:5-6 NET

For *God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son* … Colossians 1:19 NET

> The phrase “all his fullness” refers to: the fullness of God’s nature (cf. GNT) – “the sum total of the divine perfection, powers, and attributes” (AMP); and/or “all of himself” (NCV; cf. CEV, NLT), meaning that God himself in all his fullness dwells in Jesus Christ.

Section B

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

God testified to Jesus Christ being his Son

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

Others also testified to Jesus Christ being the Son of God

When evil spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!” Mark 3:11 NCV™

And *John gave this testimony*: “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him. **33**I still did not know that he was the one, but God, who sent me to baptize with water, had said to me, ‘You will see the Spirit come

down and stay on a man; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' [34]*I have seen it," said John, "and I tell you that he is the Son of God."* John 1:32-34 GNT

Jesus Christ's deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God

But *these* [miraculous signs] *are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,* and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 NET

Other events of Jesus Christ's incarnation are further evidence

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

It [the gospel] is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: as to his humanity, he was born a descendant of David; [4]as *to his divine holiness, he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death.* Romans 1:3-4 GNT

Jesus' resurrection is a weighty testimony to him being the Son of God.

Section C

Jesus Christ Is Identified with God

Jesus Christ and the Father are one

[Jesus, praying for believers:] Holy Father, keep them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they will be one, just as *you and I are one*. John 17:11b NCV

This speaks of an inseparable unity, including a unity of purpose – as reflected in Jesus praying for his followers to likewise be one.

To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him."* **8**Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content." **9**Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? *The person who has seen me has seen the Father!* How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? John 14:7-9 NET

Jesus Christ is called "God"

Thomas replied to him [Jesus], *"My Lord and my God!"* John 20:28 NET

Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ

… yet *for us there is one God, the Father*, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, *and one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 1 Corinthians 8:6 ESV

Section D

Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

The fact that Christians relate to (or treat) Jesus Christ in ways in which they relate to God, reflects and supplements the teaching in the previous sections.

Jesus Christ is worshiped

And *those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."* Matthew 14:33 ESV

The disciples worshiped Jesus as the Son of God.

People pray to Jesus Christ

They continued to stone Stephen while *he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"* Acts 7:59 NET

People obey and serve Jesus Christ

[Jesus, to his disciples:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20***teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. Matthew 28:19-20a NET

From *James, a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.* James 1:1a CEV

Section E
Jesus Christ Is Under God's Authority

See also:

- Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

The concept of Jesus Christ being eternally subordinate to God is a

historical doctrine that is still debated by Christian scholars.

God is both Jesus Christ's God and his Father

'I am ascending *to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*.' John 20:17b NET

[Paul, to believers:] I pray that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father* of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him, … Ephesians 1:17 NET

Jesus Christ is described as being subordinate to God

[Paul:] *God is the head of Christ*. 1 Corinthians 11:3b NET

But when everything has been put under him, then *the Son himself will also become subject to the one who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all*. 1 Corinthians 15:28 ISV

Jesus Christ is God's servant

[The early believers, praying to God:] Stretch out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and miracles may be performed through the name of your holy Servant Jesus. Acts 4:30 GNT

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 4

The Holy Spirit

I. General

A. The Holy Spirit of God

B. The Holy Spirit's Being

C. The Holy Spirit's Personhood

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

A. Mutual Association

B. Mutual Divine Attributes

C. Mutual Divine Roles

Part I

General

See also:

- God's Holy Spirit in His People

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. This assertion is reflected by the Holy Spirit's divine and imposing attributes. However, the Bible also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from God, portraying him as a personal being in his own right.

Section A

The Holy Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .

Now [in the beginning] the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but *the Spirit of God* was moving over the surface of the water. Genesis 1:2 NET

> The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. As such one should bear in mind that when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, it is in effect speaking of God himself.

. . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit

I will no longer hide my face from them, *when I pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the sovereign LORD*. Ezekiel 39:29 NET

The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence

[John, to believers:] Now *by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us*. 1 John 3:24b NET

This correlates the Holy Spirit with God's presence by asserting that believers having God's Spirit verifies that God lives in them.

God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

And *he* [God] *who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. Romans 8:27 NET

[Paul, to believers:] *No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* 1 Corinthians 2:11b NCV™

Section B
The Holy Spirit's Being

As well as being a spirit, the Holy Spirit is everywhere

[David, to God:] *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?* **8** *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* Psalms 139:7-8 ESV

Verse 7 links the Holy Spirit with God's presence, and so along with v. 8 implies that the Spirit is omnipresent – i.e. everywhere.

The Holy Spirit is eternal

How much more is done by the blood of Christ. He offered himself through *the*

eternal Spirit as a perfect sacrifice to God. Hebrews 9:14a NCV™

The Holy Spirit has great power

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him [the Messiah], the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, *the Spirit of counsel and might,* the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2 ESV

[John, to believers:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*. 1 John 4:4 NET

> The "one who is in you" is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit. As such, the description of the Holy Spirit as greater than Satan – "the one who is in the world" – is indicative of the Spirit's great power.

The Holy Spirit has great knowledge

[Jesus, to his disciples:] But the Advocate, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you*. John 14:26 NET

The Holy Spirit has great wisdom

But some men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen … as well as some from Cilicia and the province of Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. **10**Yet *they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke*. Acts 6:9-10 NET

> This suggests that Stephen's profound wisdom was a product of the Holy Spirit – indicative of the Holy Spirit having great wisdom.

Section C

The Holy Spirit's Personhood

The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ

[Paul, to believers:] *There is one body and one Spirit*, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, [5]*one Lord*, one faith, one baptism, [6]*one God and Father of all*, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6 NET

The Holy Spirit has his own mind

And he [God] who searches our hearts knows *the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. Romans 8:27 NET

The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics

[Paul, to believers:] Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through *the love of the Spirit*, to join fervently with me in prayer to God on my behalf. Romans 15:30 NET

But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* [23]*gentleness, and self–control*. Galatians 5:22-23a NET

> Each of these characteristics is described as a "fruit of the Spirit" because – like fruit from a tree – their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit. Arguably this implies that the Holy Spirit's own character is reflected in them.

The Holy Spirit communicates . . .

[Paul, to believers:] But *the Spirit himself speaks to God for us, even begs God for us* with deep feelings that words cannot explain. Romans 8:26b NCV™

. . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways

The church became stronger, as *the Holy Spirit encouraged it and helped it grow*. Acts 9:31b CEV

[Paul, to believers:] But if *you are led by the Spirit*, you are not under the law. Galatians 5:18 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

The NT speaks of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as three identities, but also shows them as being related to each other in a unique unity. This is in part due to divine attributes and roles being attributed to each of them. Since the 4th century the church has viewed their relationship in terms of the *Doctrine of the Trinity* – the concept of them being three "persons" but one substance.

This close-knit relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is still one of the most intriguing and debated aspects of the Bible. The following provides some basic "building blocks" for coming to terms with it.

Section A

Mutual Association

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are closely associated

[Jesus, to his disciples:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in *the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, …* Matthew 28:19 NET

[Paul, to believers:] *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* 2 Corinthians 13:14 NET

The Holy Spirit is identified with God

[Peter, to Ananias:] *Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit? …* **4** *… You lied to God!* Acts 5:3b, 4b CEV

Ananias had attempted to deceive the church, and in effect had lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter indicates that to lie to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) is to lie to God (v. 4). As such he identifies the Holy Spirit with God.

The Holy Spirit is also identified with Jesus Christ

[Paul, to believers:] Now *the Lord is the Spirit*, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. **18**And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from *the Lord, who is the Spirit*. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NET

There are a number of interpretations of “the Lord is the Spirit” (v. 17) and “the Lord, who is the Spirit” (v. 18). The ones that are arguably the most plausible are compatible with a literal reading, demonstrating the very close association between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ

[Paul, to believers:] You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed *the Spirit of God* lives in you. Now if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*, this person does not belong to him. Romans 8:9 NET

This not only closely correlates the Holy Spirit with God and with Jesus Christ, it also associates Jesus Christ with God, with the one Spirit being said to be of them both.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together

[Peter and the other apostles:] *God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* **32***And we are witnesses of these events, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.* Acts 5:31-32 NET

> Verse 32 points to the Holy Spirit's role in the salvation of people, witnessing to them. This work of the Holy Spirit is in conjunction with God's will, and with what God has done through Jesus Christ (v. 31) to save people.

Section B
Mutual Divine Attributes

The listings here and in the following section of mutual divine attributes and roles are not comprehensive. Note that the subsections usually have three verses – of which the first refers to God, the second to Jesus Christ and the third to the Holy Spirit.

Omnipresence – God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere

"Do you not know that *I am everywhere*?" the LORD asks. Jeremiah 23:24b NET

Christ did that to fill everything with his presence. Ephesians 4:10b NCV™

[David, to God:] *Where can I go to get away from your Spirit?* Where can I run from you? Psalms 139:7 NCV™

Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power

I know, LORD, that you are all-powerful; that you can do everything you want. Job 42:2 GNT

Our Lord Jesus Christ [21]*has power over everything …* Philippians 3:20b-21a CEV

[John, to believers:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*. 1 John 4:4 NET

Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge

[John, to believers:] If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that *he knows everything*. 1 John 3:20 GNT

[Jesus' disciples, to Jesus:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. John 16:30a NET

For *the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.* 1 Corinthians 2:10b NET

The Holy Spirit searches out or finds out all things (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

Section C
Mutual Divine Roles

Common divine roles reflect the fact that God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation

But for us, "*There is only one God, the Father. Everything came from him*, and we live for him. *There is only one Lord, Jesus Christ. Everything came into being through him*, and we live because of him." 1 Corinthians 8:6 GW

[Elihu:] *The Spirit of God has made me*, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Job 33:4 NET

They each give spiritual or eternal life

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 John 5:11b NET

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also *the Son gives life to whomever he wishes*. John 5:21 NET

The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help! John 6:63a NET

They each make God's people holy

Obey my laws, because *I am the LORD and I make you holy*. Leviticus 20:8 GNT

Husbands, love your wives just as *Christ loved the church and gave himself for her* **26***to sanctify her by cleansing her* with the washing of the water by the word, **27**so that he may present the church to himself as glorious – *not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless*. Ephesians 5:25-27 NET

[Paul:] I do this in order that I might bring the nations to God as an acceptable offering, *made holy by the Holy Spirit*. Romans 15:16b GW

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 5

Angels, Satan and Demons

I. Angels

A. Attributes of Angels

B. Angels and God

C. Angels and God's People

II. Satan and Demons

A. Satan's Evilness

B. Satan's Power

C. Satan's Work against God's People

D. Demons

Part I

Angels

The Bible often mentions angels. The existence and role of these mighty servants of God should be a great encouragement to believers. This is in no small part due to the fact that their work often involves believers, including giving believers supernatural help.

Note that while the great majority of references to angels in the Bible are to God's holy angels, evil angels are also mentioned. These are commonly identified with demons. In headings in this book, "Angels" primarily refer to angels of God. But bear in mind that some concepts, such as angels being very powerful, are applicable to all angels.

Section A

Attributes of Angels

Angels have a human-like form, but are very awesome

[Daniel, describing a vision:] *I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen; around his waist was a belt made of gold from Upaz.* **6***His body resembled yellow jasper, and his face had an appearance like lightning. His eyes were like blazing torches; his arms and feet had the gleam of polished bronze. His voice thundered forth like the sound of a large crowd.* Daniel 10:5-6 NET

> This is describing an angel. The reference to the angel as a "man" and the mention of his human-like features (waist, face, eyes, arms and feet) suggest that angels have a human-like form.

Angels are very powerful

He will do this when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with *his mighty angels*, … 2 Thessalonians 1:7b GNT

Suddenly *there was a severe earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled away the stone and sat on it.* Matthew 28:2 NET

> The accompanying earthquake is indicative of the angel's awesome power. The stone was the very large one that had sealed Jesus' tomb.

Angels can communicate and interact with others

Suddenly an angel came to him [Elijah] *and touched him. "Get up and eat," the angel said.* **6**Elijah saw near his head a loaf baked over coals and a jar of water, so he ate and drank. Then he went back to sleep. **7**Later the LORD's angel came to him a second time. *The angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat. If you don't, the journey will be too hard for you."* 1 Kings 19:5-7b NCV™

Section B
Angels and God

Angels surround God, and even stand in his presence

[John, describing a vision of a scene in heaven:] Then *I looked and heard the voice of many angels in a circle around the throne*, as well as the living creatures and the elders. Revelation 5:11a NET

The angel answered him [Zechariah], *"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God* … Luke 1:19a NET

Angels worship God and Jesus Christ

[John, describing a vision of a scene in heaven:] The angels who stood around the throne knelt in front of it with their faces to the ground. The elders and the four living creatures knelt there with them. *Then they all worshiped God* **12** *and said, "Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen!"* Revelation 7:11-12 CEV

And when God brings *his firstborn Son* into the world, he says, *"Let all God's angels worship him."* Hebrews 1:6 NCV™

Angels serve God and Jesus Christ

Praise the LORD, *you angels of his, you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees and obey his orders!* **21** *Praise the LORD, all you warriors of his, you servants of his who carry out his desires!* Psalms 103:20-21 NET

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers. Matthew 13:41 NET

Section C

Angels and God's People

Angels help and care for God's people

What are all the angels? They are spirits sent to serve those who are going to receive salvation. Hebrews 1:14 GW

The LORD's angel camps around the LORD's loyal followers and delivers them. Psalms 34:7 NET

Angels give people messages, including instructions . . .

About three o'clock one afternoon *he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius."* **4**Staring at him and becoming greatly afraid, Cornelius replied, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have gone up as a memorial before God. **5***Now send men to Joppa and summon a man named Simon, who is called Peter.* Acts 10:3-5 NET

Note that the Hebrew and Greek words for "angel" carry the meaning "messenger".

. . . Angels also give messages about future events

[Paul:] For *last night an angel* of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve came to me **24**and *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.'* Acts 27:23-24 NET

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, … Revelation 1:1 ESV

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Part II

Satan and Demons

See also:

- Spiritual Warfare

Many people find the existence of Satan (i.e. the devil) and demons disturbing and choose to avoid the subject. But to live the Christian life it is vital to understand our chief opponents. Moreover, the Bible has a lot to say about Satan and demons – much of which is in fact encouraging to believers.

Section A

Satan's Evilness

Satan is evil and is opposed to God's kingdom

When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one [Satan] *comes and snatches what was sown in his heart*; this is the seed sown along the path. Matthew 13:19 NET

Satan is deceitful

[Jesus, to the Jew leaders:] The devil was a murderer from the beginning. *He has never been truthful. He doesn't know what the truth is. Whenever he tells a lie, he's doing what comes naturally to him. He's a liar and the father of lies.* John 8:44b GW

Section B
Satan's Power

Satan has great power and authority in the world

Then *the devil* led him up to a high place and showed him in a flash *all the kingdoms of the world.* **6***And he said to him, "To you I will grant this whole realm – and the glory that goes along with it, for it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish.* Luke 4:5-6 NET

[John:] *… the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* 1 John 5:19b NET

Satan works in and through unbelievers

[Paul, to believers in Ephesus:] Yes, in the past you lived the way the world lives, following the ruler of the evil powers that are above the earth. *That same spirit* [Satan] *is now working in those who refuse to obey God.* Ephesians 2:2 NCV™

And they [false teachers] may wake up and escape from *the trap of the devil, who catches them to do what he wants.* 2 Timothy 2:26 NCV™

Satan is not as powerful as God

[Paul, to believers:] *The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet.* Romans 16:20a NET

Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the man who had been mute began to speak, and the crowds were amazed. … **21**[Jesus:] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his

possessions are safe. [22]But *when a stronger man attacks and conquers him, he takes away the first man's armor on which the man relied and divides up his plunder.* Luke 11:14, 21-22 NET

In v. 22 Jesus refers to his overpowering of Satan, stripping him of his power and taking what was his – a truth demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons (v. 14) and so releasing people from Satan's grip.

Satan stands condemned

… the ruler of this world has been condemned. John 16:11b NET

Section C
Satan's Work against God's People

Satan tempts God's people

[Paul, to believers in Thessalonica:] So when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear *that the tempter somehow tempted you* and our toil had proven useless. 1 Thessalonians 3:5 NET

Satan can afflict God's people

So *Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and he afflicted Job with a malignant ulcer from the sole of his feet to the top of his head.* Job 2:7 NET

[Jesus Christ, to the church in Smyrna:] 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.* Revelation 2:10a NET

Satan's influence is limited by God and Jesus Christ

[Paul:] So that I would not become too proud of the wonderful things that were shown to me, *a painful physical problem was given to me. This problem was a messenger from Satan*, sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud. **8***I begged the Lord three times to take this problem away from me.* **9***But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you."* So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NCV™

> Paul's affliction apparently came from Satan. But Paul implies that Jesus Christ permitted it, using it both to keep Paul from becoming conceited (v. 7) and to make Paul receptive to Christ's power working in him. Thus this passage illustrates that God and Jesus Christ may permit Satan to afflict (or tempt) their people, but only in accordance with their purposes. As such his power and influence is limited by them.

Section D
Demons

Evil spiritual forces are referred to by a number of names, including "demons", "evil spirits", "spirits" and (evil) "angels". In order to be concise, generally only "Demons" (or "demons") has been used in this and the following subheadings.

Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings

[Paul, to believers:] 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.* Ephesians 6:12 NET

The terms “rulers” and “powers” are indicative of the great – but limited – power of demons. The last two clauses appear to together refer to the whole of the spiritual realm.

Demons are aligned with Satan

Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon [Satan], and *the dragon and his angels fought back*. Revelation 12:7 NET

This illustrates that evil angels or demons are aligned with Satan.

Demons can possess people . . .

When he [Jesus] came to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, *two demon–possessed men* coming from the tombs met him. They were extremely violent, so that no one was able to pass by that way. Matthew 8:28 NET

. . . and demons can cause such people much harm

[A father of a demon-possessed boy:] *A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions and causes him to foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves him alone, torturing him severely.* Luke 9:39 NET

Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ

You believe that God is one; well and good. *Even the demons believe that – and tremble with fear.* James 2:19 NET

But *Jesus rebuked him* [a demon–possessed man]: *“Silence! Come out of him!”* **26***After throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.* **27**They were all amazed so that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! *He even commands the*

unclean spirits and they obey him.” Mark 1:25-27 NET

Demons face eternal punishment

Then he [Jesus Christ] will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into *the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!* Matthew 25:41 NET

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Unit 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

Chapter 6

God's Creation

I. General

A. God Made All Things

B. God Maintains Creation

C. How God Made and Maintains Creation

D. Implications of God Being Creator

II. God's Creation of People

A. Life and Death

B. The Human Spirit

C. The Uniqueness of People

D. Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

Part I

General

The formation of the universe is the most astonishing thing that has ever occurred. The Bible claims that God not only created the universe, but that he also created everything in it. Moreover, it claims that God continues to maintain the universe. If we believe that God is capable of doing this, then we should have little trouble in accepting the other claims that the Bible makes about God.

Section A

God Made All Things

God made the heavens and earth – and everything in them

You are the only LORD. *You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, with all the stars. You made the earth and everything on it, the seas and everything in them; you give life to everything.* Nehemiah 9:6a NCV™

All that God made is very good

God saw all that he had made – and it was very good! Genesis 1:31a NET

Section B

God Maintains Creation

Every creature's life is dependent on God

The life of every creature and the breath of all people are in God's hand. Job 12:10 NCV™

God provides food for all creatures

[David, to God:] *Everything looks to you in anticipation, and you provide them with food on a regular basis.* Psalms 145:15 NET

God regulates all aspects of the weather

For *to the snow he says, 'Fall to earth,' and to the torrential rains, 'Pour down.'* Job 37:6 NET

He makes the clouds rise from the far–off horizons. He makes the lightning flash out in the midst of the rain. He unleashes the wind from the places where he stores it. Jeremiah 10:13b NET

God maintains nature

[God:] *"While the earth continues to exist, planting time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease."* Genesis 8:22 NET

> God's promise that these things will continue is indicative of his control over them, regulating and maintaining them.

Section C

How God Made and Maintains Creation

God made all things with his wisdom

How numerous are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you have made them all;

the earth is filled with your creations. Psalms 104:24 ISV

The LORD created the earth by his wisdom; by his knowledge he set the sky in place. **20***His wisdom caused the rivers to flow and the clouds to give rain to the earth.* Proverbs 3:19-20 GNT

God made all things with his power

[God:] *I made the earth, its people, and all its animals with my great power and strength.* Jeremiah 27:5a NCV™

God made all things by his word

By the word of God heaven was made, and the earth was made from water and with water. 2 Peter 3:5b NCV™

God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ

All things were created by him [Christ]*, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.* John 1:3 NET

He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. **3**He reflects the brightness of God's glory and is the exact likeness of God's own being, *sustaining the universe with his powerful word.* Hebrews 1:2b-3a GNT

The Holy Spirit also has a role in creation

[A psalmist, to God:] *When you send forth your Spirit, they* [creatures] *are created, and you renew the face of the ground.* Psalms 104:30 ESV

Section D

Implications of God Being Creator

Because he made everything, all things belong to God

The heavens and the earth belong to you. And so does the world with all its people because you created them [12]*and everything else.* Psalms 89:11-12a CEV

Because he made everything, God is sovereign over all things

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. Acts 17:24a ISV

> Because he has made all things, God has the right of sovereignty over all things. God's almighty power and incomparable wisdom enable him to enforce his sovereignty.

Creation shows God's power and wisdom to be incomparable

[Job, speaking of God:] *He is wise in heart and mighty in strength – who has resisted him and remained safe?* [5]*He who removes mountains suddenly, who overturns them in his anger;* [6]*he who shakes the earth out of its place so that its pillars tremble;* [7]*he who commands the sun and it does not shine and seals up the stars;* [8]*he alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea;* [9]*he makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the constellations of the southern sky;* [10]*he does great and unsearchable things, and wonderful things without number.* Job 9:4-10 NET

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Part II

God's Creation of People

Arguably the most significant part of God's creation is his creation of people. God not only gives people life and a spirit, he has made people quite unique amongst all creatures. Also, of all his creatures, it is primarily to people that God reveals himself and relates.

Section A
Life and Death

God creates people . . .

The rich and the poor are alike in that the LORD made them all. Proverbs 22:2 NCV™

. . . God gives people life and breath

He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people. Acts 17:25b CEV

People's lives are very brief

[David, to God:] *You made my life short, so brief that the time means nothing to you. "Human life is but a breath,* **6** *and it disappears like a shadow.* Psalms 39:5-6a CEV

As many old people would affirm, in a relative sense life is very brief.

Each person is destined to die

For *death is the destiny of every person, and the living should take this to heart.* Ecclesiastes 7:2b NET

Section B
The Human Spirit

God has made people with a spirit

The LORD – who spread out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and *forms the spirit in a person* – says, … Zechariah 12:1b GW

The spirit is at the core of one's being

A person's spirit is the lamp of the LORD; *it searches through all of one's innermost being.* Proverbs 20:27 ISV

People are dead without their spirit

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

People's spirits exist after death

They [Jews] *continued to stone Stephen while he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"* Acts 7:59 NET

Here also are the spirits of those good people who have been made perfect. Hebrews 12:23b CEV

The reference is to the spirits of righteous people who had died.

Section C
The Uniqueness of People

God has made people in his own image

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth." [27]*God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them*, male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 NET

> That God has made people in his own image is evident in that they reflect such things as his personal traits – e.g. aspects of his character and intellect – and that they have a spirit. Additionally, it is noteworthy that although God essentially is spirit, some descriptions of visions or manifestations of God speak of him in terms of a human-like form (cf. Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9).

God has given people an able mind – with which they can think and reason intelligently

Who has *put wisdom in the heart*, or has *imparted understanding to the mind*? Job 38:36 NET

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* [3]*explaining and proving* that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." Acts 17:2-3 ESV

People have the moral capacity to know good from evil

And the LORD God said, "Now that *the man has become like one of us, knowing*

good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." Genesis 3:22 NET

People are to care for and act responsibly towards creation

A righteous person cares for the life of his animal … Proverbs 12:10a NET

[God, to the Babylonians:] For *you will pay in full for your violent acts against Lebanon; terrifying judgment will come upon you because of the way you destroyed the wild animals living there*. Habakkuk 2:17a NET

> The Babylonians' desolation of the forests of Lebanon (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) and their destruction of animals contravened humankind's responsibility towards nature – and they would be punished for it.

Section D

Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

See also:

- Jesus Christ is the image of God
- Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God
- To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father
- Jesus came to enable us to know God

God reveals himself to people

Then the LORD again appeared in Shiloh, for it was in Shiloh that *the LORD had revealed himself to Samuel through the word of the LORD*. 1 Samuel 3:21 NET

God reveals himself by what he does

[God:] I acted for the sake of my reputation, so that I would not be profaned before *the nations among whom they lived, before whom I revealed myself by bringing them out of the land of Egypt*. Ezekiel 20:9 NET

By delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, God revealed himself to the surrounding peoples.

Creation perpetually evidences and reveals God to all people

[Paul, speaking of wicked people:] For *what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* **20***For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.* So they are without excuse. Romans 1:19-20 ESV

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Chapter 7

God's Sovereignty

I. God's Supreme Authority

A. The LORD Is God – the Only God

B. God Reigns Supreme

C. God Defeats His Enemies

D. God Fulfills His Plans

II. God's Control over the World

A. God Has Control over Evil

B. God Has Control over Nature

C. God Has Control over the Nations

D. God Has Control over Each Person

Part I

God's Supreme Authority

As the one and only God, God reigns supreme in the world. He has supreme power over all things. As such, God defeats his enemies and he fulfills his plans. A realization of this produces submission to and worship of the one and only God.

Section A

The LORD Is God – the Only God

Note that God stated that the "LORD" was the name by which he was to be known (cf. Exodus 3:12-15).

The LORD is God

Know that the LORD is God. Psalms 100:3a NCV™

Now, *O sovereign LORD, you are the true God!* 2 Samuel 7:28a NET

The LORD is God of all people

I am the LORD, the God of all humankind. Jeremiah 32:27a NET

Hezekiah prayed before the LORD: "LORD God of Israel, who is enthroned on the cherubs! *You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.* 2 Kings 19:15a NET

The LORD is the one and only God

[God:] And *there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.* **22**"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! *For I am God, and there is no other.* Isaiah 45:21b-22 ESV

His deeds show that he is the only God

[David, to God:] For *you are great and do amazing things. You alone are God.* Psalms 86:10 NET

[God:] *See, I am the only God. There are no others. I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal, and no one can rescue you from my power.* Deuteronomy 32:39 GW

Section B

God Reigns Supreme

God rules over all

O LORD, you are great, mighty, majestic, magnificent, glorious, and *sovereign over all the sky and earth! You have dominion and exalt yourself as the ruler of all.* **12**You are the source of wealth and honor; *you rule over all*. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 NET

God rules over all authorities

The glorious God is the only Ruler, *the King of kings and Lord of lords*.
1 Timothy 6:15a CEV

God rules over the earth in righteousness

He rules the world with righteousness; he judges the nations with justice.
Psalms 9:8 GNT

God will reign forever

But *you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.* Lamentations 5:19 NET

God will impose his absolute rule on all

[John, describing a vision:] Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*
16Then the twenty–four elders who are seated on their thrones before God threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and worshiped God **17**with these words: "We give you thanks, Lord God, the All–Powerful, the one who is and who was, because *you have taken your great power and begun to reign.*
Revelation 11:15-17 NET

> The proclamation in v. 15 and the final phrase "have begun to reign" (v. 17) may mean that at this point God has begun to impose his rule on all – the actualization of the kingdom (v. 15) implemented with the imposition of God's great power (v. 17). Alternatively the past tense may be used here to indicate the certainty of God doing so in the future.

Section C
God Defeats His Enemies

No one can effectively oppose God

But *he alone is God, and who can oppose him? God does as he pleases, …* Job 23:13 CEV

[God:] For *there is no one like me, and there is no one who can call me to account. There is no ruler who can stand up against me.* Jeremiah 49:19b NET

God destroys his enemies

But *he will pay back those people who hate him. He will destroy them, and he will not be slow to pay back those who hate him.* Deuteronomy 7:10 NCV™

Section D
God Fulfills His Plans

God carries out his plans

[God:] *"Be sure of this: Just as I have intended, so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.* Isaiah 14:24b NET

God does not change his plans

God is not a human being, and he will not lie. He is not a human, and *he does not change his mind. What he says he will do, he does. What he promises, he makes come true.* Numbers 23:19 NCV™

No one can thwart God's plans

Indeed, *the LORD who commands armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it?* Isaiah 14:27 NET

God works everything for his plans

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of *him who works all things according to the counsel of his will*, …
Ephesians 1:11 ESV

God works all things that occur for the fulfillment of his plans.

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Part II

God's Control over the World

God has power over everything. This includes control over evil powers, nature, the nations of the world and each person's life. Comprehending this is vital to having a sound understanding of God and of his relationship to the world – including his relationship with ourselves.

Section A

God Has Control over Evil

God exerts control over evil

[Jacob, referring to his greedy uncle:] Yet he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. *But God did not let him harm me.* Genesis 31:7 GNT

[Paul, to believers:] No temptation has overtaken you that is unusual for human beings. But *God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. Instead, along with the temptation he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to endure it.* 1 Corinthians 10:13 ISV

> God has control over any temptation, whether it originates from Satan or our own sinful nature. This is indicative of his control over evil.

God even uses evil to fulfill his purposes

For *God has put into their minds to carry out his purpose by making a decision to give their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.* Revelation 17:17 NET

This speaks of kings or powers of the end times cooperating with the beast or anti-Christ, to unwittingly accomplish God's purpose.

Section B
God Has Control over Nature

God directs nature

He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through the clouds. **12***The clouds go round in circles, wheeling about according to his plans, to carry out all that he commands them over the face of the whole inhabited world.* Job 37:11-12 NET

He sends his command through the earth; swiftly his order reaches its destination. **16***He sends the snow that is white like wool; he spreads the frost that is white like ashes.* **17***He throws his hailstones like crumbs.* Who can withstand *the cold wind he sends*? **18***He then orders it all to melt; he breathes on it, and the water flows.* Psalms 147:15-18 NET

God can perform miracles of nature

The LORD's angelic messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "You are infertile and childless, but you will conceive and have a son. … **24***Manoah's wife gave birth to a son* and named him Samson. Judges 13:3, 24a NET

[Elijah:] *For this is what the LORD God of Israel says, 'The jar of flour* [that was about to run out] *will not be empty and the jug of oil will not run out until the day the LORD makes it rain on the surface of the ground.'"* **15***She* [a widow] *went and did as Elijah told her; there was always enough food for Elijah and for her and her family.* **16***The jar of flour was never empty and the jug of oil never*

ran out, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah. 1 Kings 17:14-16 NET

Section C
God Has Control over the Nations

God is in control of the nations

[A psalmist, to God:] For *you execute justice among the nations, and govern the people living on earth.* (Selah) Psalms 67:4b NET

[God:] *This is the plan I have devised for the whole earth; my hand is ready to strike all the nations."* [Isaiah:] **27** *Indeed, the LORD who commands armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it?* Isaiah 14:26-27 NET

> What God determines for the whole world does take place, for his power to impose his will extends over all nations. For God "controls every nation" (CEV) – none can prevent him from implementing his purposes concerning them.

God has been in control of the nations throughout history

From one human being he created all races on earth and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live. Acts 17:26 GNT

God establishes all ruling authorities

Let every person be subject to *the governing authorities*. For *there is no authority except by God's appointment, and the authorities that exist have been*

instituted by God. Romans 13:1 NET

Section D
God Has Control over Each Person

God has control over people's hearts and minds

When Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart. 1 Samuel 10:9a NCV™

The LORD caused the Egyptians to think well of them, and the Egyptians gave the people everything they asked for. So the Israelites took rich gifts from them. Exodus 12:36 NCV™

God has control over people's actions . . .

[Daniel, to King Belshazzar:] But you have not glorified the *God who has in his control your very breath and all your ways!* Daniel 5:23b NET

. . . Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God

A person plans his course, but the LORD directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9 NET

God controls all that happens to people

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that everything comes – both calamity and blessing? Lamentations 3:38 NET

[A wise teacher:] *In times of prosperity be joyful, but in times of adversity consider this: God has made one as well as the other*, so that no one can discover what the future holds. Ecclesiastes 7:14 NET

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Chapter 8

God's Word

I. General

A. What God's Word Comprises

B. Characteristics of God's Word

C. Functions of God's Word

II. Key Old Testament Covenants

A. God's Covenant with Abraham

B. God's Covenant with Israel and the Law

C. God's Dealings and Covenant with David

Part I

General

God's word is our window to God. For through it we learn about God and his relationship with us. Moreover, its unique characteristics and functions have the imprint of God.

Section A
What God's Word Comprises

God's word primarily is Scripture

If he [God] called them gods to whom *the word of God* came—and *Scripture* cannot be broken— … John 10:35 ESV

This speaks of Scripture as "the word of God".

Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. 2 Timothy 3:16a GW

Scripture comes from God, i.e. Scripture "is God's Word" (CEV).

God's word includes his laws

[A psalmist, referring to God:] *He speaks his word to Jacob, his laws and judicial decisions to Israel.* Psalms 147:19 GW

God's word includes his covenants

The LORD said to Moses, "Write these words down, because it is on the basis of these words that I am making a covenant with you and with Israel." **28**… He wrote on the tablets *the words of the covenant*—the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 34:27, 28b GNT

This speaks of words of God forming God's covenant with Israel.

God's word includes his prophecies

[God, to Jeremiah:] *Get a scroll. Write on it everything I have told you to say about Israel, Judah, and all the other nations since I began to speak to you in the reign of Josiah until now.* Jeremiah 36:2 NET

This refers to prophecies (of God's word) regarding nations.

God's word also includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people

When they [Barnabas and Saul] arrived in Salamis, *they began to proclaim the word of God in the Jewish synagogues*. Acts 13:5a NET

Jesus Christ is "the Word of God"

[John, describing a vision of Christ:] He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood, and *he is called the Word of God*. Revelation 19:13 NET

Jesus Christ is called the "Word of God" in part because much of what God says and does, he says and does through Jesus Christ.

Note: God has given his word by the Holy Spirit

Above all, you do well if you recognize this: *No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination,* **21***for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.* 2 Peter 1:20-21 NET

Section B
Characteristics of God's Word

God's word is holy, righteous and good

So then, *the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good*. Romans 7:12 NET

God's word is true . . .

The words of the LORD are true and all his works are dependable. Psalms 33:4 GNT

[Jesus, to God:] Set them apart in the truth; *your word is truth*. John 17:17 NET

. . . and what God's word foretells comes true

[Jeremiah to Jerusalem's people:] *The LORD has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago*; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes. Lamentations 2:17 GW

God's word is living and active

For *the word of God is living and active* … Hebrews 4:12a NET

> Two reasons for describing God's word as "living" are that it never ceases to be pertinent and it keeps on influencing and affecting people. The latter reason also shows it to be active.

God's word is powerful

What God has said isn't only alive and active! *It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts.* Hebrews 4:12 CEV

> God's word can penetrate to the very depths of our inner-selves, exposing our thoughts and attitudes for what they really are.

God's word is everlasting

For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass; the grass withers and the flower falls off, **25**but *the word of the Lord endures forever*. 1 Peter 1:24-25a NET

Section C
Functions of God's Word

God's word brings spiritual and eternal life

[Jesus:] The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help! *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.* … **68**Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom would we go? *You have the words of eternal life.* John 6:63, 68 NET

> In v. 63b Jesus appears to be saying that his words are spiritual, producing spiritual or eternal life. Jesus seems to be implying that it is by the Holy Spirit (v. 63a) that his words produce this life.

God's word gives light

[A psalmist, to God:] *Your word is a lamp to walk by, and a light to illumine my*

path. Psalms 119:105 NET

God's word gives "light" – guidance and spiritual insight.

God's word gives hope

[A psalmist, to God:] *Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope.* Psalms 119:49 NET

God had given the psalmist hope by his word, or promise.

God's word gives joy

The LORD's precepts are fair and make one joyful. Psalms 19:8a NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Key Old Testament Covenants

A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties. God's covenants with people are a key aspect of his word.

God's covenants with people were all initiated by God. They generally confirmed his relationship with the persons concerned – who were or who became his people. The covenants included binding promises by God of blessings for his people, reflecting his purposes for them. In some cases God's covenants also outlined what God required of his people and how they were to relate to him.

God's covenants with Abraham, Israel and David are prime instances of the role of God's word. They expound pivotal promises and (in the covenant with Israel) laws of God. They also form the background of God's relationship with his people today. Learning about them enables us to better understand the significance of much of the NT's teachings.

Section A

God's Covenant with Abraham

God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him: countless descendants; the land of Canaan; . . .

Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, **4** *"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations.* **5** *No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.* **6** *I will make you*

extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. **7***I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.* **8***I will give the whole land of Canaan – the land where you are now residing – to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God."* Genesis 17:3-8 NET

> God made an everlasting covenant with the Israelite's ancestor Abraham, aspects of which were included in God's later covenant with Israel. In the covenant God promised Abraham that if he obeyed, God would: give him numerous descendants (vv. 5-7); give his descendants the land of Canaan (v. 8); and bless all nations through him (as per the following subsection). In conjunction with this, God would be Abraham's and his descendants' God (v. 7).

. . . and that all peoples would be blessed through Abraham

[God, to Abraham:] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*. Genesis 12:3 ESV

Abraham believed God, and was accredited with righteousness

[God, to Abraham:] "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." *Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."* **6***And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.* Genesis 15:5b-6 ESV

Section B

God's Covenant with Israel and the Law

See also:

- Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law

The LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." **28**So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water. He wrote on the tablets *the words of the covenant, the ten commandments*. Exodus 34:27-28 NET

If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God

[God, to the Israelites:] *Obey me and carry out the terms of the agreement exactly as I commanded you. If you do, you will be my people and I will be your God.* Jeremiah 11:4b NET

> According to the terms of the covenant, Israel was to obey God. If Israel kept the covenant by obeying God's commands, then under the covenant they would be God's people and he would be their God.

Laws for the people's relationship with God

[God, to the Israelites:] *"You shall have no other gods besides me.* **4***"You shall not make for yourselves an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above, or on earth below, or in the water under the earth.* **5***You shall not bow down to them in worship or serve them*; because I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the iniquity of the parents, to the third and fourth

generations of those who hate me, [6]but showing gracious love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments. [7]*"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God*, because the LORD will not leave the one who misuses his name unpunished. [8]*"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.* [9]*Six days you shall labor and do all your work,* [10]*but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. And you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male or female servants, nor your livestock, nor the alien who is within your gates.* [11]For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:2-11 ISV

The commands in this and the following section are the Ten Commandments. These form the fundamentals of the whole law that God gave through Moses (referred to as the Mosaic Law).

Laws for relationships with other people

"Honor your father and your mother, that you may live a long time in the land the LORD your God is giving to you. [13]*"You shall not murder.* [14]*"You shall not commit adultery.* [15]*"You shall not steal.* [16]*"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.* [17]*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor."* Exodus 20:12-17 NET

By obeying all the law, the Israelites would have righteousness

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *It will be righteousness for us, if we're careful to obey all the law* before the LORD our God, as he commanded. Deuteronomy 6:25

Section C
God's Dealings and Covenant with David

David was chosen by God, as ruler over Israel

[God:] *I've chosen David to rule my people Israel.* 1 Kings 8:16b GW

David reigned over Israel, as a powerful and righteous king – undergirded by God

David became a great and strong ruler, because the LORD All-Powerful was on his side. … **12***David knew that the LORD had made him king of Israel and that he had made him a powerful ruler for the good of his people.* 2 Samuel 5:10, 12 CEV

David was king over all Israel, and he did what was fair and right for all his people. 2 Samuel 8:15 NCV™

God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever

[The prophet Nathan, to David:] *The LORD declares to you that he himself will build a dynastic house for you.* **12***When the time comes for you to die, I* [God] *will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom.* **13***He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent.* **14***I will become his father and he will become my son.* When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. **15***But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it*

from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **16***Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.* 2 Samuel 7:11b-16 NET

In vv. 11b, 16 “house” refers to a royal dynasty that God would build for David, in response to David’s desire to build a “house” (v. 13) or temple for God. The “descendant” spoken of in vv. 12-15 refers initially to David’s son Solomon, but is generally understood to ultimately speak of the Messiah. As such this covenant provided the people of Israel with the hope of a permanently secure kingdom (cf. vv. 10-11a) under a godly and powerful king.

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Chapter 9

The Problem of Sin

I. General

A. What Sin Is

B. Sin Is against God

C. Sin Is Universal

D. Sin Has Intrinsic Ill Effects

E. Sin Brings God's Anger and Death

II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

A. Offerings for Atonement for Sinners

B. The Blood of the Offerings

C. The Role of the Priests

Part I

General

Knowing what sin is and what its consequences are is vital to understanding God's relationship with humankind and to appreciating the need for Jesus Christ's mission. It also helps us not to sin by: clarifying what sin is (which this chapter does in general terms); and providing great motivation to avoid sin.

Section A
What Sin Is

Sin is breaking God's law

Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law. 1 John 3:4 GNT

All wrongdoing is sin

Doing wrong is always sin … 1 John 5:17a NCV™

Not doing what we should do is sin

So *whoever knows what is good to do and does not do it is guilty of sin.* James 4:17 NET

Section B
Sin Is against God

Sin is action against God

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *If anyone sins unintentionally by breaking any of the* LORD*'s commands,* he is guilty and must pay the penalty. … [19]It is a repayment offering for *the sin he committed against the LORD.* Leviticus 5:17, 19 GNT

Sin is rebellion against God

[David, to God:] Drive them out of your presence because of *their many sins* and *their rebellion against you.* Psalms 5:10b GNT

Thus, sin is hated by God

For *I, the LORD, love justice and hate robbery and sin.* Isaiah 61:8a NET

Section C
Sin Is Universal

All people have sinned . . .

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Romans 3:23 CEV

All fail to measure up to a standard compatible with God's glory.

. . . No one is righteous before God

[David, to God:] Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for *no living person is righteous in your sight.* Psalms 143:2 ISV

People in fact have a sinful nature

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death *their human nature with*

all its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24 GNT

Section D
Sin Has Intrinsic Ill Effects

Sin brings spiritual defilement

They became filthy because of what they did. Psalms 106:39 GW

Sin results in separation from God

[Isaiah, to the people of Judah:] But *your sinful acts have alienated you from your God; your sins have caused him to reject you and not listen to your prayers.* Isaiah 59:2 NET

Sin brings spiritual death

[Paul, to believers:] When *you were spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were not free from the power of your sinful self,* God made you alive with Christ, and he forgave all our sins. Colossians 2:13 NCV™

> Spiritual death involves being cut off from God – "dead to God" – without his Holy Spirit, who brings spiritual life.

Sin also brings enslavement to sin

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

Section E

Sin Brings God's Anger and Death

Sin makes one subject to God's anger

Actually *all of us were like them and lived according to our natural desires, doing whatever suited the wishes of our own bodies and minds*. In our natural condition *we, like everyone else, were destined to suffer God's anger.* Ephesians 2:3 GNT

> Here Paul refers to how all people have lived sinful lives, making them subject to God's anger.

Sin results in physical death

Therefore, just as *sin entered the world through one man* [Adam], *and death through sin, so death spread to everyone, because all have sinned*. Romans 5:12 ISV

> People may experience God's wrath and judgment for sin in various forms during their lifetime, but common to all is the judgment of physical death. Note that the verse makes reference to death initially coming as a consequence of Adam's original sin.

Sin brings the prospect of eternal "death"

[Paul, to believers:] So what benefit did you then reap from those things that you are now ashamed of? For *the end of those things is death. …* **23***For the payoff of sin is death*, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:21, 23 NET

> Particularly in view of the contrast with "eternal life" (v. 23), "death" (vv. 21, 23) appears to primarily refer to or at least encompass what is sometimes referred to as eternal "death". Because of his justice God

demands that unforgiven sin be punished with eternal “death” or destruction, involving eternal separation from God in hell. A complementary reason for this “death” is that sin makes separation from God necessary, because of his holiness.

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Part II

The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

See also:

- Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

In the law on which his covenant with Israel was based, God made provision for atonement to be made for anyone who sinned, and so for the sinner to be forgiven. This allowed the Israelites to remain in their covenant relationship with him, providing that they did not actually give up following God and his laws, as per the terms of the covenant.

The NT contains numerous references to the Mosaic Law's provision for Israel's sin. An understanding of what this provision involved enables us to more fully comprehend why Jesus Christ came and the significance of his work. For many of the concepts involved in Jesus Christ's work have their origin in the law's stipulations for making offerings for atonement for sin. These aspects of the law actually foreshadowed – and would be superseded by – what Jesus Christ would do and implement.

Section A

Offerings for Atonement for Sinners

An animal was offered to make atonement for one who sinned

If any person sins unintentionally, then he must bring a yearling female goat for a purification offering. [28]*And the priest must make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally — when he sins unintentionally before the LORD — to make*

atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. Numbers 15:27-28 NET

Atonement is where God accepts such an offering of a living being as a substitute for the life of a person who has sinned – the person's life otherwise being required as punishment. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person's sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God.

Animals brought as offerings were to be without defect

If this person [who had sinned] *brings a lamb as his offering for sin, he must bring a female that has nothing wrong with it.* Leviticus 4:32 NCV™

The sinner laid hands on the offering, signifying it as a substitute

He must lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. Leviticus 1:4 NET

This practice appears to have signified that the animal was a substitute for the sinner. Moreover, it may also have signified the transfer of the person's sins to the animal (cf. Leviticus 16:21-22).

Section B

The Blood of the Offerings

The blood of the offerings for sin featured in making atonement

Then *the high priest must bring some of the blood of the bull to the Meeting Tent,*

17*and that priest must dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD toward the front of the veil–canopy.* **18***He must put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before the LORD in the Meeting Tent, and all the rest of the blood he must pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the Meeting Tent.* **19**"'Then the priest must take all its fat and offer the fat up in smoke on the altar. **20**He must do with the rest of the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; this is what he must do with it. *So the priest will make atonement on their behalf and they will be forgiven.* Leviticus 4:16-20 NET

As this passage illustrates, the blood of animals sacrificed as offerings to make atonement for sinners featured prominently in the instructions given for presenting the offerings. The reason was the correlation of blood with life (as discussed in the following subsection). The blood signified the life of the animal, given as a substitute for the life of the sinner (as reflected in the previous subsection).

For the life of a creature is in its blood

[God:] … for *the life of every living thing is in the blood. So I myself have assigned it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives, for the blood makes atonement by means of the life.* Leviticus 17:11 NET

Blood sustains life and so is often correlated with life.

Section C
The Role of the Priests

God designated Aaron and his descendants as priests

[God, to Moses:] And you, *bring near to you your brother Aaron and his sons*

with him from among the Israelites, so that they may minister as my priests – Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. Exodus 28:1 NET

[God, to Moses:] *And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever.* Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. Exodus 29:9b ESV

When God made his covenant with Israel, he instituted the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood as an integral aspect of the covenant law, in particular in regard to the regulations concerning the people's relationship with himself.

The priests made the offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them

And *the priest shall make atonement for him* [a person who had sinned] *with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he has committed*, and he shall be forgiven for the sin that he has committed. Leviticus 19:22 ESV

The high priest made atonement yearly for Israel as a whole

"The priest who is anointed and ordained to act as high priest in place of his father is to make atonement. He is to put on the linen garments, the holy garments, **33**and he is to purify the Most Holy Place, he is to purify the Meeting Tent and the altar, and *he is to make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.* **34**This is to be a perpetual statute for you *to make atonement for the Israelites for all their sins once a year*." Leviticus 16:32-34a NET

The Day of Atonement was to be observed once each year, for the high priest to cleanse the nation as a whole of all sin. It was the most important observance of the OT rituals, the only time the high priest

could enter the Most Holy Place.

Note that the Most Holy Place was where the ark of the covenant was kept. The ark contained the stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments, the basis of God's covenant with Israel. The ark signified God's presence amongst the Israelites.

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 10

God's Judgment

I. Basics

A. God Is the Judge of the World

B. Reasons for God's Judgment

C. God's Judgment Is Just

II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

A. Means of God's Judicial Retribution

B. Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

C. The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

D. God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

Part I

Basics

The fact that God does and will judge us is one of the Bible's key teachings, without which the significance of other key Bible teachings is lost – notably that of salvation. An understanding of it is also vital to understanding God himself. Additionally, bear in mind that God's judgment – being just and righteous – actually gives his people much reason to be encouraged.

Section A

God Is the Judge of the World

God is judge – of the whole earth

The heavens declare his fairness, for *God is judge*. Psalms 50:6 NET

[Abraham, to God:] *You are the judge of all the earth …* Genesis 18:25b CEV

God makes judgments in the world

He is the LORD our God; *he carries out judgment throughout the earth.*
1 Chronicles 16:14 NET

God makes himself known by his judgment

[God, to the people of Edom:] I will deal with you according to your anger, and according to your envy, by which you acted spitefully against them [the people of Israel]. *I will reveal myself to them when I judge you.* Ezekiel 35:11b NET

Section B

Reasons for God's Judgment

God's judgment is to punish sin and unfaithfulness

[Daniel, to God:] *All Israel has broken your law and turned away by not obeying you. Therefore you have poured out on us the judgment solemnly threatened in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against you.* Daniel 9:11 NET

[God, pronouncing judgment on King Zedekiah:] *I will bring him to Babylon and judge him there because of the unfaithfulness he committed against me.* Ezekiel 17:20b NET

God's judgment is to discipline God's people

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

God's judgment is to punish the wicked

But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, by being kept for *the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*. 2 Peter 3:7 NET

God's judgment is also to reward God's people

[Elders in heaven, to God:] The nations were enraged, but your wrath has come, and *the time has come for the dead to be judged, and the time has come to give to your servants, the prophets, their reward, as well as to the saints and to those who revere your name, both small and great,* and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth. Revelation 11:18 NET

As well as punishment for wrongdoing, God's judgment includes reward for godliness.

Section C
God's Judgment Is Just

God judges righteously and justly

This is evidence of God's righteous judgment, to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which in fact you are suffering. 2 Thessalonians 1:5 NET

For he has fixed a day in which *he will judge the whole world with justice* by means of a man he has chosen. Acts 17:31a GNT

God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds

[Jeremiah, to God:] *You see everything people do. You reward each of them for the way they live and for the things they do.* Jeremiah 32:19b NET

One reason why God's judgment is just is that he judges people with knowledge of all their deeds – as well as of all their thoughts and motives (as per the following subsection). As such he can make judgments with knowledge of all the relevant information.

God takes into account thoughts and motives

[Jeremiah:] So I said to the LORD, "O LORD who rules over all, *you are a just judge! You examine people's hearts and minds.* Jeremiah 11:20a NET

God judges and repays people according to what they do

[Paul:] But because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are storing up

wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, *when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* **6**For *he will repay everyone according to what that person has done: …* Romans 2:5-6 ISV

God gives fair warning, allowing for judgment to be avoided

[God:] *There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom.* **8***But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it.* Jeremiah 18:7-8 NET

What is said here regarding nations is also applicable to individuals.

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Part II

The Manifestation of God's Judgment

See also:

- Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

The topic of God's judgment – particularly its manifestation – is often avoided, as it contains much that is anything but "nice". However it contains some of the most awe-inspiring teaching, and even reason for hope for God's people.

Section A

Means of God's Judicial Retribution

The following list is by no means exhaustive.

Angels

[A psalmist, referring to God:] *He inflicted his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, sending destroying angels among them.* Psalms 78:49 ISV

Nature

The LORD sent darkness and made the land dark, but the Egyptians turned against what he said. **29***So he changed their water into blood and made their fish die.* **30***Then their country was filled with frogs, even in the bedrooms of their rulers.* **31***The LORD spoke and flies came, and gnats were everywhere in the country.* **32***He made hail fall like rain and sent lightning through their land.* **33***He*

struck down their grapevines and fig trees, and he destroyed every tree in the country. **34***He spoke and grasshoppers came; the locusts were too many to count.* **35***They ate all the plants in the land and everything the earth produced.* Psalms 105:28-35 NCV™

Nations

[God:] Look, *I am about to empower the Babylonians, that ruthless and greedy nation. They sweep across the surface of the earth, seizing dwelling places that do not belong to them. …* **12***…* [Habakkuk:] *LORD, you have made them your instrument of judgment. Protector, you have appointed them as your instrument of punishment.* Habakkuk 1:6, 12b NET

Section B

Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

Note that not all instances of God's judicial retribution display all of the following characteristics – certainly not to the extent of which they are spoken of here. Much of the judgment spoken of in this section is conclusive in its purpose, bringing the finality of death – as opposed to God's disciplinary judgment.

Awesome power

The sounds of battle will resound to the ends of the earth. For the LORD will bring charges against the nations. He will pass judgment on all humankind and will hand the wicked over to be killed in war.' The LORD so affirms it! **32***The LORD who rules over all says, 'Disaster will soon come on one nation after another. A mighty storm of military destruction is rising up from the distant parts*

of the earth.' Jeremiah 25:31-32 NET

Inescapable

[Paul:] And *do you think, whoever you are, when you judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment?* Romans 2:3 NET

Terrifying

Destruction, devastation, and desolation! *Their hearts faint, their knees tremble, each stomach churns, each face turns pale!* Nahum 2:10 NET

For if we choose to go on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27]but only *a terrifying prospect of judgment and a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God*. Hebrews 10:26-27 ISV

Horrific consequences

[God, concerning Pharaoh:] *I will throw you into an open field, where birds and animals will come to feed on your body.* [5]*I will spread your rotting flesh over the mountains and in the valleys,* [6]*and your blood will flow throughout the land and fill up the streams.* Ezekiel 32:4-6 CEV

Section C

The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment on the wicked

[Jeremiah:] LORD, you have always been fair whenever I have complained to you. However, *I would like to speak with you about the disposition of justice. Why are wicked people successful? Why do all dishonest people have such easy lives?* Jeremiah 12:1 NET

The situation of the wicked is precarious

These people [the wicked] *may prosper, but they will never feel secure about life.* **23***God may let them feel confident and self-reliant, but his eyes are on their ways.* Job 24:22b-23 GW

In due time God does take action against the wicked

[God:] *To me belong vengeance and recompense. In due time their feet will slip, because their time of calamity is near and the things prepared for them draw near.* Deuteronomy 32:35 ISV

The wicked reap what they sow, brought down by their own evil

[Eliphaz:] Even as I have seen, *those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble reap the same.* Job 4:8 NET

The violence done by the wicked will drag them away because they refuse to do what is right. Proverbs 21:7 NET

The future of the wicked contrasts with that of the righteous

[A psalmist, speaking of a righteous person:] For *he will never be upended; others will always remember one who is just.* **7***He does not fear bad news. He is confident; he trusts in the LORD.* **8***His resolve is firm; he will not succumb to*

fear before he looks in triumph on his enemies. **9***He generously gives to the needy; his integrity endures. He will be vindicated and honored.* **10***When the wicked see this, they will worry; they will grind their teeth in frustration and melt away; the desire of the wicked will perish.* Psalms 112:6-10 NET

Although a righteous person may fall seven times, he gets up again, but the wicked will be brought down by calamity. Proverbs 24:16 NET

Section D
God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant

[God:] *They have gone back to the evil ways of their ancestors of old who refused to obey what I told them. They, too, have paid allegiance to other gods and worshiped them. Both the nation of Israel and the nation of Judah have violated the covenant I made with their ancestors.* Jeremiah 11:10 NET

Despite the Mosaic Law's provision for Israel's sin, the Israelites as a whole persisted in sin – rebelling against God and breaking his covenant with them. This showed that ultimately the law was not sufficient to deal with sin.

Eventually God decided to destroy unfaithful Israel

[God:] *My people, you abandoned me and walked away. I am tired of showing mercy; that's why I'll destroy you* **7***by scattering you like straw blown by the wind. I will punish you with sorrow and death, because you refuse to change your ways.* Jeremiah 15:6-7 CEV

But God promised to spare a remnant of Israel

[Isaiah, speaking a message from God:] *Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit.* **31***For a remnant will leave Jerusalem; survivors will come out of Mount Zion. The intense devotion of the sovereign LORD to his people will accomplish this.* 2 Kings 19:30-31 NET

Note that “Judah” was the name of the southern Israelite kingdom and that “Mount Zion” alludes to Jerusalem, with Zion originally being the name of one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built.

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Unit 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

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15. 'The Last Things'

I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

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Chapter 11

God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity

A. The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

B. Prophecy of the Messiah's Death for Sins

C. Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

D. Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

A. Jesus Christ's Mission from God

B. Jesus Christ's Humanity

C. Jesus Christ's Personality

D. Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

Part I

The Messiah's Identity

The OT Scriptures speak of a leader chosen and sent by God to save his people and to reign forever. This leader is known as the "Christ" or the "Messiah" – which are Greek and Hebrew terms respectively, meaning the "anointed" or the "Anointed One". In NT times the Jews looked forward to the Messiah's coming and many still do today. But the NT provides compelling evidence that this Messiah was in fact Jesus Christ.

Section A
The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God

[The archangel Gabriel, to Daniel:] So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem *until an anointed one, a prince arrives*, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty–two weeks. Daniel 9:25a NET

> Regarding the "weeks", many scholars understand the term to denote seven years.

The anointed one would have God's Spirit on him

[The Messiah:] *The Spirit of the Lord* GOD *is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me* to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; … Isaiah 61:1 ESV

These words are prophetically attributed to the Messiah.

The Scriptures speak of the coming of a great ruler of Israel

[God:] As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah – *from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past.* Micah 5:2 NET

The ruler would bring salvation to the nations

[God, to the Messiah:] *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.* Isaiah 49:6b ESV

The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David

The LORD swore an oath to David. This is a truth he will not take back: "I will set one of your own descendants on your throne. … **17**There *I will make a horn sprout up for David. I will prepare a lamp for my anointed one.* **18***I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on my anointed one will shine."* Psalms 132:11, 17-18 GW

The "horn" and "lamp" (v. 17) speak of the strength and continuation of David's dynasty, and would be embodied by the Messiah.

Section B

Prophecy of the Messiah's Death for Sins

The OT Scriptures say the Messiah would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted

He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds. **6***We have all strayed like sheep. Each one of us has turned to go his own way, and the LORD has laid all our sins on him.* Isaiah 53:5-6 GW

But *it was the LORD who decided to crush him and make him suffer. The LORD made his life a penalty offering, but he will still see his descendants and live a long life.* He will complete the things the LORD wants him to do. **11***"After his soul suffers many things, he will see life and be satisfied. My good servant will make many people right with God; he will carry away their sins.* **12***For this reason I* [God] *will make him a great man among people, and he will share in all things with those who are strong. He willingly gave his life and was treated like a criminal. But he carried away the sins of many people and asked forgiveness for those who sinned."* Isaiah 53:10-12 NCV™

These verses speak of God raising his messianic servant to life, following his death. The term "his descendants" (v. 10b) refers to the messianic servant's spiritual descendants – those who would be given life through him. Note that Isaiah 52:13-53:12 has been called "the gospel in the OT" and is quoted in the NT more than any other OT passage.

Section C
Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

In his first coming, Jesus Christ did not come as an all-conquering ruler. The NT indicates that this aspect of messianic prophecy will be fulfilled on Christ's second coming.

Jesus Christ is the one chosen by God

[God:] "*This is my Son, my Chosen One.* Listen to him!" Luke 9:35b NET

Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .

[Peter:] You know that *God anointed Jesus from Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*. Acts 10:38a GW

> The descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus at his baptism (cf. Matthew 3:16-17) was God's anointing of Jesus for his mission. It is also understood to mark Jesus as the Messiah – the "Anointed One" – and fulfilled OT prophecies that God would bestow his Spirit on the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

. . . Jesus is the Messiah

[Peter, to a crowd of largely Jews:] Therefore repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, **20**so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and so that he may send *the Messiah appointed for you – that is, Jesus*. Acts 3:19-20 NET

The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ

For with his strong arguments he [Apollos] defeated the Jews in public debates by *proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah*. Acts 18:28 GNT

For the OT Scriptures speak of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .

Paul went to the Jews in the synagogue, as he customarily did, and on three

Sabbath days *he addressed them from the scriptures,* [3]*explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."* Acts 17:2-3 NET

. . . and they speak of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ

[Zechariah, speaking of what God had done:] *He has raised up a mighty Savior for us in the family of his servant David.* [70]*He made this promise through his holy prophets long ago.* Luke 1:69-70 GW

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

> Luke 1:69-70 (above) refers to the messianic salvation prophesied in the writings of the prophets (v. 70) as coming through Jesus, who was from the family line of David (v. 69). Acts 10:43 (immediately above) states that the prophets testify that the forgiveness of sins, a key aspect of this salvation, comes through Jesus Christ.

Section D
Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ

Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. [31]*But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,* and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:30-31 NET

People acknowledged him as the Christ

The crowds that went ahead of him [Jesus] *and those following kept shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!* Hosanna in the highest!" Matthew 21:9 NET

The crowd was acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, referring to him with messianic expressions in declaring him "the Son of David" and the one "who comes in the name of the Lord".

Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God

Simon Peter answered, "You are *the Christ, the Son of the living God*." Matthew 16:16 NET

The understanding that the Christ would be the Son of God appears to be largely based on OT messianic passages where God speaks of the Messiah as his Son (cf. 2 Samuel 7:11b-14a; Psalms 2:6-7; 89:27).

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Part II

The Messiah's Purpose and Person

Arguably the fundamental assertion of the NT is that God sent the Messiah – Jesus Christ – into the world to save people from sin and its devastating consequences. For this mission, Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and became fully human – further assertions that are very significant to the Christian faith. In fulfilling the objectives of the mission, Jesus Christ lived a life which was faultless, with his character being both exemplary and inspiring. The following teaching shows the NT's testimony to these crucial matters.

Section A

Jesus Christ's Mission from God

God sent Jesus Christ into the world

[Jesus, to the Jews:] But I have a testimony greater than that from John. For *the deeds that the Father has assigned me to complete – the deeds I am now doing – testify about me that the Father has sent me*. John 5:36 NET

God sent Jesus Christ to take away sins

You know that *Christ came to take away sins*. 1 John 3:5a CEV

God sent Jesus Christ to save the world

For *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him*. John 3:17 NET

Jesus came to bring truth

[Jesus:] *For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world – to testify to the truth.* Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. John 18:37b NET

Jesus came to enable us to know God

And *we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to know him who is true,* and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:20a NET

Section B
Jesus Christ's Humanity

Jesus Christ became a human being

By *sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh* and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, … Romans 8:3b NET

God sent Jesus Christ "in a human body like ours" (NLT).

Jesus was born – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. … **22***This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled:* **23***"Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son,* and they will call him Emmanuel," which means "God with us." Matthew 1:18, 22-23 NET

Jesus was a descendant of David

Remember *Jesus Christ*, who was raised from death, *who was a descendant of David*, as is taught in the Good News I preach. 2 Timothy 2:8 GNT

Jesus' humanity was vital to his mission to save people

Therefore, *since the children share in flesh and blood, he* [Jesus] *likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil),* **15** *and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. …* **17** *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.* **18** *For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.* Hebrews 2:14-15, 17-18 NET

> Jesus needed to share in the humanity of God's people and become like them so as to be identified with them, in a sense being one with them. As such he could die as a substitute and an offering for them. Partaking of their humanity would also be important for him in his ongoing role in helping God's people, as indicated in v. 18 and possibly also in v. 17.

Section C

Jesus Christ's Personality

See also:

- Jesus Christ's Character

Jesus was loving

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love.* John 15:9 NET

Jesus was compassionate

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36 NET

Jesus was gentle and humble

[Jesus:] Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because *I am gentle and humble in heart,* and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29 NET

Jesus was righteous

For *Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,* that he might bring us to God, … 1 Peter 3:18a ESV

Section D
Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

See also:

- God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ

God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere

But now *in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son.* God has chosen his Son to own all things, and *through him he made the world.* Hebrews 1:2 NCV™

Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven. Colossians 1:20 GNT

God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ

For *all God's promises are "Yes" in him.* 2 Corinthians 1:20a ISV

All God's promises are confirmed or "fulfilled" (NLT) in Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 12

Jesus Christ's Mission

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

A. Jesus Christ's Power from God

B. Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

C. Jesus Christ's Direction from God

II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

A. Jesus Christ's Miracles

B. Jesus Christ's Teaching

C. Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

D. Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

Part I

God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

God enabled Jesus Christ to carry out his mission, empowering and directing him. Consequently what Jesus did and said showed that he had been sent and empowered by God. For without God no one could possibly have the extraordinary authority, power and knowledge that Jesus had.

Section A
Jesus Christ's Power from God

God granted Jesus sovereign authority

[Jesus:] *All things have been handed over to me by my Father*. Matthew 11:27a NET

For *you* [God] *have given him authority over all humanity* so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him. John 17:2 ISV

God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission

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

As noted earlier, the descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus Christ at his baptism is understood to be God's anointing of Jesus Christ for his mission (cf. Luke 4:18). As such, through the Holy Spirit God

empowered Jesus in his mission.

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did

The man [Jesus] *whom God has sent speaks God's message. After all, God gives him the Spirit without limit.* John 3:34 GW

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him. Acts 10:38 ISV

Presumably the power spoken of was due to the Holy Spirit, the power being given in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. This verse also appears to correlate Jesus having the Holy Spirit with God's presence being with him.

Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power

The power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal the sick. Luke 5:17b GNT

One night Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we know you are a teacher sent from God, because *no one can do the miracles you do unless God is with him*." John 3:2 NCV™

Section B
Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

God taught Jesus

[Jesus:] I do nothing on my own initiative, but *I speak just what the Father taught me*. John 8:28b NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] But I have called you friends, because *I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father*. John 15:15b NET

Jesus taught his disciples everything he learned from God.

Jesus knew everything

[The disciples, to Jesus:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God. John 16:30 NET

The final statement arguably suggests that Jesus' knowledge of all things was due to God. Jesus' complete knowledge would appear to have been due to both God's teaching of him (as per the previous subsection) and God enabling him to know or perceive all things about people and everything else.

Jesus was also filled with wisdom

And *the child* [Jesus] *grew and became strong, filled with wisdom,* and the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40 NET

Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom

[Men trying to trick Jesus:] Is it right for us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar or not?" **23**But *Jesus perceived their deceit and said to them,* **24***"Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?" They said, "Caesar's."* **25***So he said to them, "Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* **26***Thus they were unable in the presence of the people to trap him with his own words. And stunned by his answer, they fell silent.* Luke 20:22-26 NET

No one could answer him at all, and from that day on no one dared to ask him

another question. Matthew 22:46 ISV

Section C
Jesus Christ's Direction from God

God worked through Jesus . . .

[Peter:] Listen to these words, fellow-Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by *all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him*. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. Acts 2:22 GNT

. . . Jesus only did what God did

So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, *the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.* John 5:19 NET

Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him

Jesus said to them, *"My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.* John 4:34 NET

> In speaking of doing God's will as his "food", Jesus indicated that it was his prime source of "nourishment" (AMP, NLT). Doing God's work was in a sense what sustained him and was his top priority.

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Part II

Ministry, Death and Resurrection

The life Jesus Christ lived has been unparalleled in word and deed. It culminated in his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection by God. How we respond to the NT's testimony to these events and their significance, will determine our eternal destiny.

Section A

Jesus Christ's Miracles

Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people

People were completely astounded and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak. Mark 7:37 NET

Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders

People brought to him all who suffered with various illnesses and afflictions, those who had seizures, paralytics, and those possessed by demons, and he healed them. Matthew 4:24b NET

Jesus even raised the dead

And they began making fun of him, because *they knew that she was dead.* **54***But Jesus gently took her by the hand and said, "Child, get up."* **55***Her spirit returned, and she got up immediately.* Luke 8:53-55a NET

Jesus exercised control over nature, in helping people

Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped. … **39**So *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.* Mark 4:37, 39 NET

[Andrew, to Jesus:] Here is a boy who has *five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many people?"* **10**Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." … So the men sat down, *about five thousand in number.* **11***Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed the bread to those who were seated. He then did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted.* John 6:9-11 NET

Section B
Jesus Christ's Teaching

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God

Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23 NET

> The kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) was the most prominent theme in Jesus' teaching.

Jesus' teaching was from God

[Jesus:] *This teaching that you hear is not really mine; it is from my Father, who sent me.* John 14:24b NCV™

Jesus' teaching was amazing – leading people to believe in him

When the crowds heard this, *they were amazed at his teaching*. Matthew 22:33 NET

And *many more believed because of the things he said*. **42**They said to the woman, "First we believed in Jesus because of your speech, but *now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know that this man really is the Savior of the world."* John 4:41-42 NCV™

Section C

Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him

Now *because Jesus was doing these things* [miracles] *on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began persecuting him*. **17**So he told them, "My Father is working until now, and I too am working." **18**For this reason *the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him*, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God. John 5:16-18 NET

The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, *"I find no basis for an accusation against this man." … **20**Pilate addressed them once again because he wanted to release Jesus. **21**But they kept on shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" **22**A third time he said to them, "Why? What wrong has he done? I have found him guilty of no crime deserving death.* I will therefore flog him and release him."

23*But they were insistent, demanding with loud shouts that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed.* **24***So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.* Luke 23:4, 20-24 NET

The horrific suffering and death of Jesus

Then he [Pilate] released Barabbas for them. But *after he had Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified*. **27**Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole cohort around him. **28***They stripped him and put a scarlet robe around him,* **29***and after braiding a crown of thorns, they put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, and kneeling down before him, they mocked him: "Hail, king of the Jews!"* **30***They spat on him and took the staff and struck him repeatedly on the head.* **31***When they had mocked him*, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes back on him. *Then they led him away to crucify him.* … **35***When they had crucified him*, they divided his clothes by throwing dice. … **39***Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads* **40***and saying, "You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are God's Son, come down from the cross!"* … **45**Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. **46***At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* … **50***Then Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit.* Matthew 27:26-31, 35, 39-40, 45-46, 50 NET

> In v. 46, Jesus' cry (cf. Psalms 22:1) suggests that the intimate relationship between himself and God had in some way or sense been impaired.

It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone

[Peter, to a crowd of largely Jews:] *In accordance with his own plan God had*

already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. Acts 2:23 GNT

God didn't spare his own Son but handed him over to death for all of us. Romans 8:32a GW

Section D
Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

God raised Jesus from the dead

But *God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death,* because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. Acts 2:24 NET

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb

[An early believer:] Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. *They were at the tomb early this morning,* **23***and* when *they did not find his body,* they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. **24***Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said,* but they did not see him. Luke 24:22-24 NET

Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection

To the same apostles also, after his suffering, he presented himself alive with many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty–day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 NET

[Peter, to a crowd of largely Jews:] *This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it.* Acts 2:32 NET

Jesus was taken up to God in heaven

After he [Jesus] had said this, while they were watching, *he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight.* **10**As *they were still staring into the sky while he was going*, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them **11**and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? *This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven."* Acts 1:9-11 NET

Because he suffered death, God gave Jesus Christ great glory

We see him now crowned with glory and honor because of the death he suffered. Hebrews 2:9b GNT

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Chapter 13

Salvation through Jesus Christ

I. Salvation from Sin

A. Jesus Christ's Sacrifice for Us

B. Atonement for Sin

C. Redemption from Sin

D. Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

II. Salvation for the World

A. The Savior of the World

B. Life through Jesus Christ

C. Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

D. Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

Part I

Salvation from Sin

The teachings in this section are at the absolute heart of the NT and the gospel message. It is critical for anyone trying to comprehend the Christian faith to soundly understand them.

Section A

Jesus Christ's Sacrifice for Us

Jesus gave himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins

Live a life of love just as *Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.* Ephesians 5:2 NCV™

Jesus brought the sacrifice for the sins of the people once and for all when he sacrificed himself. Hebrews 7:27b GW

So, Jesus Christ died for us

But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8 NET

> Christ gave his life as a substitute for our lives. He died in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we would not have to pay it ourselves with everlasting death. Instead we can have everlasting life. This is life which extends beyond physical death. Note that as the Son of God, Christ's life is worth infinitely more than our lives; thus his death was an adequate sacrifice for any number of people.

Section B

Atonement for Sin

Biblical atonement is where God in his grace accepts an offering or sacrifice of a living being (i.e. its life) as a substitute for the life of a sinner – the person's life otherwise being required for their sin. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person's sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God. In conjunction with this, God's wrath – provoked by sin – is appeased.

In the OT, people who had sinned brought an animal as an offering of a life, for the priests to sacrifice on their behalf to make atonement for them. Jesus Christ's offering or sacrifice of himself has a number of striking parallels with this OT practice. Furthermore, his death in fact fulfilled this requirement of the OT law once and for all, making such offerings no longer necessary. The atonement made by Jesus Christ's death is central to the Christian faith.

Jesus Christ's sacrifice means that our sins can be forgiven . . .

[Jesus:] For *this is my blood of the new covenant that is being poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins*. Matthew 26:28 ISV

But now, at the end of the ages, *he has appeared once for all to remove sin by his sacrifice*. **27**Indeed, just as people are appointed to die once and after that to be judged, **28**so *the Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people*. Hebrews 9:26b-28a ISV

. . . and that we can therefore be righteous before God

[Paul, to believers:] Much more then, because *we have now been declared righteous by his blood*, we will be saved through him from God's wrath. Romans 5:9 NET

Consequently, through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .

[Paul, to believers:] You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. [22]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*. Colossians 1:21-22 CEV

. . . and so through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God

[Paul, to believers:] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Romans 5:1 ESV

Thus, Jesus Christ was the atoning sacrifice for sins, saving people from God's wrath

It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's. 1 John 2:2 ISV

[Paul, to believers:] For *God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thessalonians 5:9 NET

Section C
Redemption from Sin

To “redeem” someone was to set them free by paying a ransom, a payment of comparable value. Such terminology was often used in NT times in reference to paying the price to free a slave. In the NT Scriptures it is applied to Jesus Christ redeeming or freeing believers from enslavement to sin by giving his life as a ransom.

Jesus gave himself as a ransom for us, to free us from sin

For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, *Christ Jesus, himself human,* **6***who gave himself as a ransom for all,* revealing God’s purpose at his appointed time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 NET

[John, to believers:] To the one who loves us [Christ] and *has set us free from our sins at the cost of his own blood* … Revelation 1:5b NET

> Christ redeems or frees people from enslavement to sin, through having given his life as a ransom for them (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 ↑). This concept of redemption is complementary to that of atonement.

Jesus Christ’s death sets us free from sin’s control

He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good. Titus 2:14 NET

God’s people have been bought by Jesus Christ’s death

They [heavenly beings] were singing a new song: “You [Christ] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were killed, and *at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.* Revelation 5:9 NET

> An implication of believers being redeemed from sin by Jesus Christ’s

death is that they have been bought for God – to whom they are now slaves (as the following subsection indicates).

As such, they are free from sin and are now slaves to God

[Paul, to believers:] But now that *you have been freed from sin and have become God's slaves*, the benefit you reap is sanctification, and the result is eternal life. Romans 6:22 ISV

Section D
Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in us being saved

[Peter, speaking to believers and making reference to baptism:] It is not the washing away of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. *It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, …* 1 Peter 3:21 GNT

By what baptism symbolizes (as opposed to the act of baptism) we are saved by Jesus Christ's resurrection – the culmination of his saving work.

Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection

[Paul, to believers:] And *if Christ has not been raised*, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. **18**Furthermore, *those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished.* **19**For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone. **20***But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the*

firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21***For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man.* **22***For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* **23***But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then when Christ comes, those who belong to him.*
1 Corinthians 15:17-23 NET

> The “firstfruits” (vv. 20, 23) alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, they were seen as a confirmation that the rest would take place. Here the term is applied to Christ, as like the firstfruits of the harvest, his resurrection precedes and is an assurance of the resurrection of all believers.

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Part II

Salvation for the World

Prior to Jesus Christ's mission, God dealt primarily with Israel, as his people. What Christ accomplished had great implications for all people – notably in making God's salvation, with eternal life, freely available to every person. An associated outcome is that people from all nations can readily become one of God's own people.

Section A
The Savior of the World

God provides salvation through Jesus Christ . . .

For *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* John 3:17 ESV

. . . Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world

[John:] And we have seen and testify that *the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* 1 John 4:14 NET

We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us. Acts 4:12 GNT

Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 NET

The first statement may well mean that: Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the truth and the life. The second statement emphatically states that he is the only way to God, one implication of which is that Jesus is the only source of salvation.

Section B
Life through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ brings spiritual life

[Jesus:] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; *I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly*. John 10:10 NET

The "life" spoken of in the NT that Jesus Christ provides is spiritual life. It involves being "alive to God" (Rom 6:11), with God's Holy Spirit indwelling us, renewing and nourishing us. With this, we have a spiritual consciousness that enables us to live in communion with and in dependence on God. This spiritual life is only attainable through Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life rather than death

For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. …* **36***The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.* John 3:16, 36 NET

Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies,* **26***and the one who lives and believes in me will never*

die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 NET

Jesus is the one through whom resurrection and life come (v. 25a). Those who believe in him will live even though they die physically (v. 25b). At a spiritual level they will never die (v. 26a), but live eternally.

Section C
Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

In OT times it was firstly only the Israelites, then after the Babylonian captivity more specifically the Jews, who were "God's people" and knew of God's salvation. But through Jesus Christ's mission, God has made salvation open to the Gentiles.

Jesus Christ died for all people

But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, so *that through God's grace he should die for everyone*. Hebrews 2:9a GNT

Salvation is now open to everyone who will accept it by repentance and faith (cf. Getting Right with God).

God has made the way of faith in Jesus open also to Gentiles

God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. … **30***God is one, and he will put the Jews right with himself on the basis of their faith, and will put the Gentiles right through their faith.* Romans 3:22a, 30 GNT

Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one

Jesus was going to die for the Jewish people, [52]*and not only for them, but also to bring together into one body all the scattered people of God.* John 11:51b-52 GNT

By dying for all people, Jesus has enabled both Jews and Gentiles to become part of the one people of God.

Those who believe are the true, spiritual children of Abraham

The Scriptures say the same thing about Abraham: *"Abraham believed God, and God accepted Abraham's faith,* and that faith made him right with God." [7]*So you should know that the true children of Abraham are those who have faith.* Galatians 3:6-7 NCV™

Section D
Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel

And so *God chose his Servant and sent him first to you* [the Jews], *to bless you by making every one of you turn away from your wicked ways.* Acts 3:26 GNT

The Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ

He came to what was his own, but *his own people did not receive him.* John 1:11 NET

So, God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles

But *by their* [the people of Israel's] *transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous*. … **15**For if *their rejection is the reconciliation of the world*, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? Romans 11:11b, 15 NET

In v. 11, their "transgression" refers to the Jews'/Israel's rejection of the gospel, God's way of righteousness that is by faith in Christ.

God has left a faithful remnant of Israel

So in the same way *at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace*. Romans 11:5 NET

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Chapter 14

The New Order

I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

A. Righteousness by Faith and Grace

B. Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

C. The Relevance of the Law

II. Key Elements of the New Order

A. God's New Covenant

B. Jesus Christ as High Priest

C. The Kingdom of God

D. Jesus Christ as Lord of All

Part I

Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

In order to be righteous before God, the Israelites had to continually follow the law God had given through Moses, keeping all of its commands – something which they proved incapable of doing. But through Jesus Christ's life and death, God has provided a new way of righteousness, for all people – leading to salvation. As a result of this, the role of the law has been profoundly changed.

Section A
Righteousness by Faith and Grace

The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection

The law of Moses could not make anything perfect. Hebrews 7:19a NCV™

We are not made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ

For *by works of the law no human being will be justified in his* [God's] *sight,* since through the law comes knowledge of sin. **21***But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—* **22***the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* Romans 3:20-22a ESV

God's way now for us to be made righteous before him is through having faith in Jesus Christ. This primarily involves believing Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of

righteousness – and accordingly trusting in him for one's own righteousness.

In conjunction with this, faith in Jesus Christ encompasses believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his death and resurrection; and the outcomes of his mission. This is discussed further in Getting Right with God.

We are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law

But *they* [people] *are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Romans 3:24 NET

[Paul:] *I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!* Galatians 2:21 NET

God's grace is his free and undeserved favor to people. By God's grace we are granted righteousness through Jesus Christ's death for us – as opposed to earning righteousness through obeying the law.

We are saved by God's grace rather than by works

For *by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;* **9***it is not from works,* so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 NET

Here "works" refers to things done in attempting to work for or earn righteousness and salvation – particularly in trying to fulfill the law.

Section B

Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards

For *the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.* … **10**By his will *we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* Hebrews 10:1, 10 NET

> The Mosaic Law had primarily worked toward the removal of sin and making God's people holy. But its work really only foreshadowed "the reality" (v. 1) that would be realized through Jesus Christ. For the law's sacrifices for sin were not sufficient to comprehensively deal with sin and make people perfect (v. 1). But with the sacrifice of himself, Jesus Christ fulfilled what the law with its sin offerings in effect pointed towards, by consummately removing sins (cf. v. 12) and making God's people holy (v. 10).

Through Christ believers have been released from the law

Thus *the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith.* **25***But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian*. Galatians 3:24-25 NET

> The law was only ever to be the authority over God's people until Jesus Christ came, when faith would supersede it as the way for God's people to be righteous.

With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin

Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective for ever, and then he sat down at the right-hand side of God. … **17**And then *he* [God]

says, "I will not remember their sins and evil deeds any longer." **18***So when these have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed.* Hebrews 10:12, 17-18 GNT

Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace

[Paul, to believers:] For sin will have no mastery over you, because *you are not under law but under grace.* Romans 6:14 NET

> Believers are not under the law but "under grace". By grace righteousness and salvation are not only gained, as discussed earlier, but are also maintained. For in his grace God enables believers to live godly lives and continues to provide for forgiveness when they do sin. Accordingly, believers are to rely on God's grace both in striving to please God and for forgiveness.

Section C
The Relevance of the Law

The main purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin

For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for *through the law comes the knowledge of sin.* Romans 3:20 NET

The law's spiritual and moral commands are still to be obeyed

[Jesus:] I tell you the truth, *until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter will pass* [away] *from the law until everything takes place.* **19***So anyone who breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever obeys*

them and teaches others to do so will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:18-19 NET

> The spiritual and moral commands of the law basically are the commands pertaining to the believer's spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with people. Most likely here Jesus had these commands at least primarily in view, with a number of them being the subject of his subsequent teaching (cf. vv. 21-48).

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Part II

Key Elements of the New Order

Through Christ's mission God enhanced his relationship with his people and the world. Two defining aspects of this new order are God's new covenant with his own people and the kingdom of God.

As well as having instituted these two things in his mission, Jesus Christ continues to play a key role in both of them. Jesus Christ's role as high priest is arguably the central aspect of God's new covenant with his people. Jesus Christ's reign as Lord of all things involves reigning over the kingdom of God. Additionally, his reign extends to reigning over all things that are as yet to be subjugated to God's kingdom, which awaits consummation.

Section A

God's New Covenant

The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the new covenant – through Christ

But *now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry* [to the priests' ministry], *since the covenant that he mediates is also better* [than the first covenant] *and is enacted on better promises.* **7***For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one. …* **13***When he* [God] *speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.* Hebrews 8:6-7, 13 NET

The covenant which God made with Israel proved inadequate as Israel could not keep the covenant (by obeying its law) and consequently could not be righteous before God. But God has abolished the old covenant and introduced a superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ and his mission.

Under the new covenant, God's people: have God's laws in them; know him; and are forgiven

"For *this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts.* And I will be their God and they will be my people. **11** And *there will be no need at all for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.* **12** *"For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer*." Hebrews 8:10-12 NET

Under the new covenant God's laws have become internal principles (v. 10), not just commands from an external source. Moreover, God's people know him and their sins are truly forgiven (v. 11-12). Bear in mind that the reference to "the house of Israel" (v. 10) is applicable to the new people of God, inclusive of Gentiles.

Section B
Jesus Christ as High Priest

See also:

- Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the high priest of God's people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary

[The writer, to believers:] *We have such a high priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,* **2***a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.* Hebrews 8:1b-2 NET

In the replacement of God's old covenant with Israel by God's new covenant with all who are now his people, the priesthood of the old covenant has been replaced by Christ's superior priesthood.

Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all

But when *this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time,* he sat down at the right hand of God, **13**where he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. **14**For *by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy*. Hebrews 10:12-14 NET

Jesus Christ intercedes for God's people

[John, to believers:] I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but *if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ,* the righteous one. 1 John 2:1 GNT

In his ongoing priestly ministry for God's people, Christ continues to intercede before God for them, speaking to God on their behalf.

Section C

The Kingdom of God

NT teaching on the kingdom of God (or of heaven) follows on from OT teaching on God's reign (cf. 7. God's Sovereignty). It indicates that Christ's coming inaugurated a more far-reaching, spiritual dimension of God's reign. Its domain is in the hearts and minds of those who submit to God. This kingdom also has both a present and future dimension – existing now, but only being fully consummated at the end of the age. Then God's authority will be fully imposed in all spheres of existence – once and for all.

The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission

Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of God. **15***He said, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near.* Repent and believe the gospel!" Mark 1:14-15 NET

> With Jesus' mission, the time had come for the kingdom of God to "come near" (NRSV).

The kingdom of God is spiritual in its nature

[Jesus:] *"The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen.* **21***No one will say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'; because the Kingdom of God is within you."* Luke 17:20b-21 GNT

> The final clause of v. 21 probably means that God's kingdom is within the hearts of its people (cf. CEV text note), indicative of its spiritual nature.

The kingdom of God is dynamic

He [Jesus] also said, *"The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground.* **27***He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.* **28***By itself the soil produces a crop,*

first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. **29***And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come."* Mark 4:26-29 NET

> The growth of God's kingdom illustrates its dynamism and power. "By itself" (v. 28) indicates that the growth of the kingdom is not brought about simply by human effort. Rather it is in a way that is in fact beyond human comprehension (v. 27b).

Section D

Jesus Christ as Lord of All

God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all things, to rule over all creation on God's behalf.

The NT speaks of Jesus Christ's lordship as being initiated or affirmed, in him being pronounced Lord of all upon his post-resurrection exaltation to God's right hand. However, note that some verses suggest that in some sense at least he was Lord of all things prior to this, speaking of his prior power or authority over all things.

God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all

You know the message he [God] sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through *Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all*. Acts 10:36 GNT

As a result [of Jesus being obedient and dying] *God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,* **10***so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth –* **11***and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father*. Philippians 2:9-11

NET

> Note that vv. 10-11 above speak of all people in the future acknowledging Jesus Christ's status as Lord, which itself is a current reality.

God has given Jesus Christ power over all things

Jesus knew that the Father had given him power over everything and that he had come from God and was going back to God. John 13:3 NCV™

In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered

But when this priest [Christ] had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13**where *he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.* Hebrews 10:12-13 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 15

‘The Last Things’

I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Judgment

A. The Timing of Jesus Christ’s Return

B. Jesus Christ’s Return

C. The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

D. The Final Judgment (II): The Process

E. The Millennium

II. The Afterlife

A. The New Creation

B. Eternal Life

C. The Heavenly State of God’s People

D. Being with God

E. The Punishment for the Ungodly

Part I

Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

The history of the world as we know it will culminate in Jesus Christ's dramatic and awesome return. Associated with this is God's final judgment of all people, through Jesus Christ, in which the eternal destiny of each person will be pronounced.

Note that further events of the end times are discussed in The Persecution of God's People. Although they are events that precede Christ's second coming, they are still an aspect of the biblical teachings that are often referred to as 'The Last Things'.

Section A

The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

Jesus Christ will return at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual

You know very well that *the day the Lord comes again will be a surprise, like a thief that comes in the night.* 1 Thessalonians 5:2 NCV™

No one knows when that day or hour will come—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father, **37***because just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of Man comes.* **38***In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage right up to the day when Noah went into the ark.* **39***They were unaware of what was happening until the flood came and swept all of them away. That's how it will be when the Son of Man comes.* Matthew 24:36-39 ISV

Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events

And *when you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be afraid. For these things must happen first, but the end will not come at once."* **10***Then he* [Jesus] *said to them, "Nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.* **11***There will be great earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven.* Luke 21:9-11 NET

For *that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.* **4***He opposes and exalts himself above every so–called god or object of worship, and as a result he takes his seat in God's temple, displaying himself as God.* 2 Thessalonians 2:3b-4 NET

> This "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) appears to be a final antichrist, (cf. Revelation 13), instigating momentous "rebellion" (v. 3) against God.

Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Christ's return

Immediately after the suffering of those days, *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.* **30***Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven,* and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. Matthew 24:29-30a NET

Section B
Jesus Christ's Return

Jesus Christ will return with his angels

He will do this *when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with his mighty*

angels, … 2 Thessalonians 1:7b GNT

Jesus Christ will come in great glory

Then *they* [people] *will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory.* Luke 21:27 NET

On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be gathered to him

[Paul, to believers:] For *the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* **17***Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NET

On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed

But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then *when Christ comes,* those who belong to him. **24***Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power.* **25***For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*
1 Corinthians 15:23-25 NET

Section C

The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

God will judge every person, for all they have done

For *we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.* Romans 14:10b NET

But *remember that God will judge you for everything you do.* Ecclesiastes 11:9b NCV™

The dead will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned

Many of those who sleep in the dusty ground will awake – some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence. Daniel 12:2 NET

Section D
The Final Judgment (II): The Process

God will judge all people through Jesus Christ

[Paul:] *God will judge the secrets of human hearts, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.* Romans 2:16b NET

On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done

For *the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.* Matthew 16:27 NET

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will have eternal life

But these [miracles of Jesus] are recorded so *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* John 20:31 NET

Those who have rejected Jesus Christ will be condemned

But those who don't believe are already condemned because they don't believe in God's only Son. John 3:18b GW

This and the above subsections show that people will be judged according to their deeds and their response to Jesus Christ.

What people have known will be taken into account

For *all who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law*. Romans 2:12 NET

Gentiles without knowledge of the Mosaic Law, by nature have a grasp of its requirements (cf. vv. 14-15) and will be judged as such (v. 12a). Those who know the law have a clearer understanding of what God requires, and so they will be judged more strictly (v. 12b).

Section E
The Millennium

The prophecy of a thousand year reign of Jesus Christ

They [believers who had been martyred] *came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* [5]*(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection.* Revelation 20:4b-5 NET

Revelation 20:1-6 is critical to the concept of "The Millennium". Each of verses 2-6 refers to a thousand year period – a millennium. This millennium is also arguably referred to by numerous OT passages (cf. God's Plans for Israel) and possibly a few other NT ones.

The two most popular interpretations of this “Millennium” today are the Amillennialist and Premillennialist viewpoints. Amillennialists view the reign of deceased believers with Christ (cf. Revelation 20:4b ↑) to refer to a present reign in heaven. They see this reign as having been introduced by Jesus Christ’s first coming, with him being pronounced Lord of all. They believe that Jesus Christ will return, and then the general resurrection will occur, followed by the final judgment. Following this would be the reign of Jesus Christ over the new earth in the afterlife.

Premillennialists believe that Christ’s return will be followed by a first resurrection of believers, who will reign with Christ in a literal thousand-year rule of righteousness on earth. This would then be followed by the final resurrection and then the final judgment.

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Part II

The Afterlife

The believer's hope is largely based on God's wonderful promises for his people in the afterlife, the life begun by their resurrection. At the center of these promises is the final, everlasting phase of God's relationship with his people. In contrast to these promises are the teachings about the horrific eternity that the ungodly face.

Section A
The New Creation

The present heavens and earth will pass away

[Jesus:] *Heaven and earth will pass away …* Matthew 24:35a NET

God will create new heavens and a new earth

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

God's people will live in the new Jerusalem

[John, describing a vision:] *Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. …* **27***Nothing unclean, no one who does anything detestable, and no liars will ever enter it. Only those whose names are written in the lamb's Book of Life will enter it.* Revelation 21:2, 27 GW

Section B
Eternal Life

As God raised Christ from the dead, God will raise his people

[Paul, to believers:] *Now God indeed raised the Lord and he will raise us by his power.* 1 Corinthians 6:14 NET

On Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ

[Paul, to believers:] It is the same *with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown* [one's natural body] *is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.* **43***It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;* **44***it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. …* **49***And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust* [Adam]*, let us also bear the image of the man of heaven* [Christ].
1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 49 NET

God's people will be given eternal life

[Jude, to believers:] Keep yourselves in God's love as you *wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever*. Jude 1:21 NCV™

Section C
The Heavenly State of God's People

God's people will enter the kingdom of God

[Paul, to believers:] All of this shows that God judges fairly and that *he is making you fit to share in his kingdom* for which you are suffering.
2 Thessalonians 1:5 CEV

God's people will be made perfect

[Paul:] Not that I have already attained this – that is, *I have not already been perfected* – but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. Philippians 3:12 NET

Paul implies that believers will be made perfect.

God's people will have glory

[Peter, to believers:] I make this appeal as a spiritual leader who also witnessed Christ's sufferings and *will share in the glory that will be revealed*. 1 Peter 5:1b GW

There will be no more sorrow and no more death

He [God] *will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more – or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist.* Rev 21:4 NET

Section D
Being with God

God's people will be with God and Jesus Christ forever

[John, describing a vision:] *Now God's presence is with people, and he will live with them,* and they will be his people. *God himself will be with them* and will be

their God. Revelation 21:3b NCV™

And so *we* [believers] *will always be with the Lord*. 1 Thessalonians 4:17b NET

God's people will see God

They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. Revelation 22:4 NCV™

God's people will praise God

[John, describing a vision of believers in heaven:] Then I heard what seemed to be *a large crowd that sounded like a roaring flood and loud thunder all mixed together. They were saying, "Praise the Lord! Our Lord God All-Powerful now rules as king.* Revelation 19:6 CEV

Presumably such praise of God will continue throughout eternity.

God's people will serve God

[John, speaking of believers in heaven:] For this reason *they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple*, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. Revelation 7:15 NET

Section E

The Punishment for the Ungodly

The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ

[Jesus:] Then I will declare to them [who do not do God's will], 'I never knew you. *Go away from me, you lawbreakers!*' Matthew 7:23 NET

The ungodly will be thrown into fire

[John, describing a vision:] *This is the second death – the lake of fire.* **15** *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.* Revelation 20:14b-15 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Unit 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

Chapter 16

The Standing of God's People

I. Basics

A. Prologue: God Draws People to Himself

B. God's People Belong to God

C. God's People Are His Family

D. God's People Are His Church

II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

A. God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ

B. The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ

C. God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ

D. Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

Part I

Basics

This chapter looks at the standing or position of God's people in relationship to God. Probably the most basic aspect of this is that they belong to God, as his people. As such the relationship between believers and God is both a strong one and a close one. This is underlined by them being his family and also his church.

Section A

Prologue: God Draws People to Himself

See also:

- God's Invitation

God chooses people (to be his people)

[Jesus:] If the Lord had not shortened those days, no one would be saved. But for the sake of *the elect whom he has chosen*, he has shortened those days. Mark 13:20 ISV

> These verses illustrate that the Bible teaches that God chooses some people to be his, and so to be saved. Yet the Bible also teaches that God desires and provides for the salvation of all people (cf. God invites all people to come to him and be saved). In coming to terms with this "tension" in Scripture, bear in mind that as the Bible teaches both "sides", the truth lies in both of them, as opposed to a position that is a compromise of both.

God moves people to believe and turn to Jesus Christ

[Jesus:] *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,* and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:44 NET

But among them [believers] were some men from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and began talking to the Hellenistic Jews too, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. **21***The hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number of people believed and turned to the Lord.* **22**When the church in Jerusalem heard this news, they sent Barnabas all the way to Antioch. **23**When he arrived, *he rejoiced to see what the grace of God had done …* Acts 11:20-23a ISV

> The people's belief and turning to the Lord (v. 21b) is attributed to neither how the message was presented nor the people's own initiative, but to the "hand of the Lord" (v. 21a) – evidencing "the grace of God" (v. 23).

Section B
God's People Belong to God

God's people belong to him

[Peter, to believers:] However, you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, *people who belong to God.* 1 Peter 2:9a GW

They are God's people . . .

[Paul, to believers:] *God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people.* Colossians 3:12a CEV

. . . and God is their God

[Abijah, king of Judah:] But *as for us, the LORD is our God* and we have not rejected him. 2 Chronicles 13:10a NET

God's people likewise belong to Jesus Christ

[Paul, to believers:] If we live, it is for the Lord that we live, and if we die, it is for the Lord that we die. So *whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.* Romans 14:8 GNT

Section C
God's People Are His Family

Each believer belongs to the family of God

[Paul, to non-Jewish believers:] Now you who are not Jewish are not foreigners or strangers any longer, but are citizens together with God's holy people. *You belong to God's family.* Ephesians 2:19 NCV™

God is their Father

[Paul, to believers:] To all those loved by God in Rome, called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from *God our Father* and the Lord Jesus Christ! Romans 1:7 NET

They are God's children

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

Those who accept Jesus and believe in him (v. 12a) are enabled to become God's children (v. 12b) – born of God (v. 13) into spiritual life.

As God's children, they are also heirs of God

[Paul, to believers:] *And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ)* – if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:17 NET

Section D
God's People Are His Church

See also:

- The Church as One Body

God's people form his church

[Paul, to the Ephesian church leaders:] Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to *shepherd the church of God* that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. Acts 20:28 NET

The term "church" denotes an assembly or body of believers that belong to God. Additionally, it can be used more generally of God's people as a whole – the worldwide church.

The church is God's temple, in which God dwells by his Spirit

[Paul, to the Corinthian church:] Do you not know that *you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you*? 1 Corinthians 3:16 NET

He [Jesus Christ] is the one who holds the whole building together and *makes it grow into a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord.* **22***In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a place where God lives through his Spirit.* Ephesians 2:21-22 GNT

Jesus Christ is the ruler of God's church

But *Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.* Hebrews 3:6a NET

This speaks of Jesus Christ being "in charge" (CEV, GNT, NLT) of God's house or church – i.e. its ruler or Lord.

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Part II

Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ

Arguably the most fundamental change in the standing of God’s people in relationship to him that followed what Jesus Christ accomplished, is that they are now “in” Jesus Christ. Being “in” Jesus Christ involves the association or correlation of believers with Jesus Christ, by which God views them in association with his Son.

It is based on, or at least connected with, their spiritual union with Jesus Christ – in which they participate with him in such things as: his victory over sin and death; his life; and other blessings he has secured. (See also the comment below in *God’s people are united with Jesus Christ*.) As such it has great significance in the relationship of believers to God.

Note that expressions like “in Jesus Christ” sometimes have other meanings, such as “through Jesus Christ”. While the verses in this section have been interpreted here as using such expressions to speak of believers being “in” Jesus Christ, in some instances the meaning is debatable.

Section A

God’s People Are ‘in’ Jesus Christ

God’s people are “in” Jesus Christ

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints [in Ephesus], *the faithful in Christ Jesus*. Ephesians 1:1 NET

Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people

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™

The King in this parable represents Jesus Christ himself. Commentators generally interpret "my people" to be referring to Christians.

God's people live with Jesus Christ

[Paul:] For we also are weak in him, but *we will live together with him*, because of God's power toward you. 2 Corinthians 13:4b NET

Section B
The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ

Generally speaking at least, the spiritual standing and blessings that believers have are based on them being "in" Jesus Christ. As referred to earlier, this means that they are granted by God the standing and blessings that Jesus Christ has attained on behalf of those so associated with him.

"In" Jesus Christ God's people are redeemed and forgiven

[Paul, to believers:] He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of *the Son he loves*, **14***in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. Colossians 1:13-14 NET

"In" Jesus Christ God's people have righteousness

[Paul, to believers:] God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so *that in him we would become the righteousness of God*. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NET

"In" Jesus Christ believers share in the righteousness of God (cf. GNT).

"In" Jesus Christ believers are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life

[Paul, to believers:] *In him you also were circumcised* – not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but *by the removal of the fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ.* **12***Having been buried with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.* **13**And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, *he* [God] *nevertheless made you alive with him* [Christ], *having forgiven all your transgressions*. Colossians 2:11-13 NET

Verses 11-12 speak of one's sinful nature being cut off through one being buried and raised with Christ. Following on from this, Paul speaks of believers being given life with Christ (v. 13).

Section C

God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ

All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body "in" Jesus Christ

[Paul, to believers:] *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* Galatians 3:28 NET

Oneness in Jesus Christ takes primacy over all distinctions. In him "there is no difference" (GNT, NCV) between contrasting groups such as Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, and males and females. For no group is spiritually superior to another, and all are equal before God (cf. Ephesians 6:8-9). Note that the use of "Greek", as opposed to "Jew", appears to denote all Gentiles.

The church is the body of Christ

Now *the church is his body, the fullness of him* who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:23 NET

The description of the church as the "body" of Christ figuratively depicts the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with his people, and points to the oneness that his people have together in their relationship to Christ.

Jesus Christ is the head of the body

He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things. Colossians 1:18 NET

Section D
Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ's death and priesthood have opened the way into God's presence for God's people

[The writer, to believers:] So, brothers and sisters, *we are completely free to enter the Most Holy Place without fear because of the blood of Jesus' death.*

20 *We can enter through a new and living way that Jesus opened for us. It leads through the curtain—Christ's body.* **21** *And since we have a great priest over God's house,* **22** *let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, because we have been made free from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.* Hebrews 10:19-22 NCV™

The reference to Jesus Christ's body as "the curtain" (v. 20) is drawing a parallel between: his death which opened a way for believers to confidently enter into God's presence; and the curtain which the high priest went through to enter the Most Holy Place of God's presence, in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit

[Paul, to believers:] *It is through Christ that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, are able to come in the one Spirit into the presence of the Father.* Ephesians 2:18 GNT

Verses such as this which speak of God's people relating to God (e.g. praying to him) "through" Jesus Christ, appear to have in view one or more of the following three concepts: Jesus Christ's death opening the way into God's presence; Jesus Christ's priesthood; and God's people being "in" Jesus Christ. All three are aspects of Jesus Christ's mediatory role in a believer's relationship with God.

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Chapter 17

Keys to God's Interaction

I. Basics

A. God Is Always with His People

B. God Knows His People

C. God Loves and Is Faithful to His People

D. God Shows Grace to His People

II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

A. God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People

B. God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit

C. The Holy Spirit Renews God's People

D. The Holy Spirit Helps God's People

Part I

Basics

This section looks at some basic factors underlying God's interaction with his people. They show that God's relationship with his people is not an aloof, impersonal one – far from it. God is always with his people and they can actually know him. Complementary to this is God's great love and steadfast faithfulness towards his people. Undergirding all God's interaction with his people is his truly amazing grace.

Section A

God Is Always with His People

God and Jesus Christ are always with their people

[God:] *Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* Joshua 1:5b ESV

[Jesus:] And *remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age*. Matthew 28:20b NET

> Note that most of what this and the following chapters in *Part D. God and His Own People* say about God is also applicable to Jesus Christ.

God is with his people wherever they go . . .

Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for *the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*. Joshua 1:9b ESV

. . . God also goes before his people

The LORD himself will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forget you. Don't be afraid and don't worry. Deuteronomy 31:8 NCV™

God is with his people in trouble – and sees them through it

God is our refuge and strength, *an ever-present help in times of trouble*. Psalms 46:1 GW

[God:] *When you pass through the waters, I am with you; when you pass through the streams, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not harm you.* Isaiah 43:2 NET

Section B
God Knows His People

God and Jesus Christ know their people

The LORD said to Moses, "I will do this thing also that you have requested, for you have found favor in my sight, and *I know you by name*." Exodus 33:17 NET

[Jesus, speaking of himself as "the good shepherd":] *He calls his own sheep by name* and leads them out. … **14**"I am the good shepherd. *I know my own* and my own know me – … John 10:3b, 14 NET

In Exodus 33:17, "I know you by name" indicates: intimate knowledge – "I know you very well" (GNT, NCV); and a personal relationship – "I know you personally" (AMP); "you are my friend" (NLT, cf. CEV). A similar comment could probably be made regarding the like expression in John 10:3b.

God and Jesus know all their people's needs and troubles

Do not be like them, for *your Father knows what you need before you ask him*. Matthew 6:8 NET

[Jesus Christ, to the church in Ephesus:] *I know the distress you are suffering and your poverty* (but you are rich). *I also know the slander against you* by those who call themselves Jews and really are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Revelation 2:9 NET

Section C
God Loves and Is Faithful to His People

God loves his people greatly

[David, to God:] You are good to us and forgiving, *full of constant love for all who pray to you*. Psalms 86:5 GNT

Wicked people have many troubles, but *the LORD's love surrounds those who trust him*. Psalms 32:10 NCV™

God's love is with his people always

[God, speaking of David:] *My steadfast love I will keep for him forever*, and my covenant will stand firm for him. Psalms 89:28 ESV

God's love is "steadfast" – constant and reliable.

God is faithful to his people

The LORD always proves faithful and reliable to those who follow the demands of his covenant. Psalms 25:10 NET

God faithfully keeps his promises to his people

Not one of the LORD's faithful promises to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; every one was realized. Joshua 21:45 NET

Section D
God Shows Grace to His People

What God does for his people is based on his "grace" – his free and undeserved favour. God's grace in the believer's salvation is discussed earlier (cf. We are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law; We are saved by God's grace rather than by works). This section speaks of the ongoing role of God's grace in his people's lives.

God shows much grace towards his people

[Paul, to the Corinthians:] And in their [needy believers'] prayers on your behalf they long for you because of *the extraordinary grace God has shown to you*. 2 Corinthians 9:14 NET

> Here Paul speaks of God's grace in moving the Corinthians to generously give towards supporting needy believers.

By grace God's people are given spiritual blessings

Out of the fullness of his [Christ's] *grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.* John 1:16 GNT

By grace God's people are strengthened

[The writer, to believers:] Do not let all kinds of strange teachings lead you from the right way. *It is good to receive inner strength from God's grace*, and not by obeying rules about foods; those who obey these rules have not been helped by them. Hebrews 13:9 GNT

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Part II

God's Holy Spirit in His People

God's incomparable gift of his Holy Spirit is critical to God's relationship with each of his people – including God's work in and through them. In part at least, this is due to the Holy Spirit being the prime means by which God renews and helps believers.

Section A
God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People

God gives his people his Holy Spirit, to live in them

[Paul, to believers:] And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through *the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* Romans 5:5 NET

[Paul, to Timothy:] Protect that good thing [the truth] entrusted to you, through *the Holy Spirit who lives within us.* 2 Timothy 1:14 NET

Having the Holy Spirit shows a person is one of God's people . . .

[Paul, to believers:] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but *you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father."* **16***The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children.* Romans 8:15-16 NET

> The Spirit testifies to believers that they are God's children (v. 16). Accordingly, by the Spirit they call God "Abba" or Father (v. 15).

. . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person

[John, to believers:] Now *by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us*. 1 John 3:24b NET

Having the Spirit of God verifies that God himself lives in us.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come

[Paul, to believers:] *When you believed in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* **14***who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own possession*, to his praise and glory. Ephesians 1:13b-14 ISV

God's "own possession" refers to believers, who have been marked as such by being given the Holy Spirit.

Section B
God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit

God saves his people through the Holy Spirit

[Paul, to believers:] *God chose you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit* and faith in the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:13b NET

God teaches his people through the Holy Spirit

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

God works through his people by the Holy Spirit

[God, to Zerubbabel who was a leader of the Jews:] ‘Not by strength and not by power, *but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD who rules over all.” 7 “What are you, you great mountain? Because of Zerubbabel you will become a level plain! And he will bring forth the temple capstone with shoutings of ‘Grace! Grace!’ because of this.”* Zechariah 4:6b-7 NET

God would accomplish the work he was doing through Zerubbabel by his Spirit. Mountainous problems would be overcome and Zerubbabel would “bring forth the temple capstone” (v. 7b) signifying the completion of the work (the rebuilding of the temple).

Section C

The Holy Spirit Renews God’s People

The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life

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

Particularly in light of the verse’s first clause, the final statement may indicate that the words Jesus spoke were from (cf. CEV) or spoken through the Holy Spirit. As such they are words that the Holy Spirit uses to produce life – when people live according to them.

The Holy Spirit makes God’s people holy

[Peter, to believers:] God the Father decided to choose you as his people, and *his Spirit has made you holy*. 1 Peter 1:2a CEV

The Holy Spirit produces spiritual “fruit” in God’s people

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. Galatians 5:22-23 NET

Section D
The Holy Spirit Helps God’s People

The Holy Spirit helps each believer

[Paul, to believers:] In the same way, *the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings.* Romans 8:26 NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] I will ask the Father, and *he will give you another Helper to be with you forever—* **17***the Spirit of truth.* John 14:16-17a NCV™

The Holy Spirit leads God’s people

Those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s children. Romans 8:14 GNT

> The Holy Spirit may lead a person by an inner conviction or sense of assurance, by circumstances, or even by a discernible revelation. (Giving such a revelation to a person with a prophetic spiritual gift is one way the Holy Spirit leads and directs Christian groups.)

The Holy Spirit empowers God’s people to do God’s work . . .

[Jesus, to his disciples:] But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and*

Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth. Acts 1:8 NET

Through the Holy Spirit the disciples would receive “power (ability, efficiency, and might)” (AMP), enabling them to witness for Christ far and wide.

. . . The Holy Spirit has a key role in what God’s people say

[Jesus, to his disciples:] You will be brought before governors and kings because of me, to testify to them and to the gentiles. **19**When they hand you over, don’t worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say, because *in that hour what you are to say will be given to you.* **20***It won’t be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* Matthew 10:18-20 ISV

When they [the believers] had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God courageously*. Acts 4:31 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 18

God's Transformation of His People

I. General

A. God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

B. God Makes His People Holy

C. God Teaches His People

D. God Disciplines His People

II. Spiritual Attributes

A. Love, Faith and Hope

B. Peace

C. Joy

D. Wisdom and Knowledge

Part I

General

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

Section A

God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

God’s people are given spiritual life

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

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

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

[Paul, to believers:] *We know that the persons we used to be were nailed to the*

cross with Jesus. This was done, so that our sinful bodies would no longer be the slaves of sin. [7]*We know that sin doesn't have power over dead people.* [8]*As surely as we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. …* [11]*… Christ Jesus has given life to you, and you live for God.* Romans 6:6-8, 11b CEV

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

God's people are spiritually reborn of God

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

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

God's people are a new creation

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

Section B

God Makes His People Holy

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

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

God makes his people holy

[Paul, to believers:] Now *may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24**He who calls you is trustworthy, and *he will in fact do this*. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NET

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

So *Jesus also suffered outside the city to make his people holy with his own blood.* Hebrews 13:12 NCV™

God’s people are in fact being transformed to be like Jesus

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

> Paul has the development of the believer’s sanctification in view, with their characters growing more like Christ. As such believers

increasingly reflect and even manifest Christ's glory.

Section C
God Teaches His People

See also:

- God teaches his people through the Holy Spirit

God teaches his people how to live

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

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

God enables his people to know the truth

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

Section D
God Disciplines His People

God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves

[The writer, to believers:] And have you forgotten *the exhortation addressed to you as sons? "My son, do not scorn the Lord's discipline or give up when he*

corrects you. **6** *"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts."* **7** *Endure your suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?* **8** *But if you do not experience discipline, something all sons have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons.* Hebrews 12:5-8 NET

God's discipline is done in righteousness and faithfulness

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

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

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

[A psalmist, to God:] *You have put us to the test, God; as silver is purified by fire so you have tested us.* **11** *You let us fall into a trap and placed heavy burdens on our backs.* **12** *You let our enemies trample over us; we went through fire and flood, but now you have brought us to a place of safety.* Psalms 66:10-12 GNT

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Spiritual Attributes

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

Section A

Love, Faith and Hope

God and Jesus Christ give their people love and faith . . .

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

. . . God teaches his people to love

God has taught you to love each other. 1 Thessalonians 4:9 GW

God gives his people hope by what he has done through Christ

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

Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God has brought believers into an

"ever-living hope" (v. 3). This encompasses the hope of their own resurrection and an everlasting inheritance in heaven (v. 4).

God's promises give his people hope

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

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

Section B
Peace

The OT speaks of God giving inner peace (including being at ease) and outer peace (the absence of war and adversity). In addition to peace with God, the NT speaks of God (and Jesus Christ) giving an inner, spiritual peace – even amidst adversity.

God gives his people peace . . .

… the LORD blesses his people with peace. Psalms 29:11b NCV™

. . . Jesus Christ gives his people peace

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

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

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

It is a great peace

The LORD gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm. Isaiah 26:3 CEV

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

Section C
Joy

God and Jesus Christ give joy to their people

[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. Romans 15:13 NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.* John 15:11 NET

It is an enduring joy

[Jesus, to his disciples:] So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and *your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.* John 16:22 NET

The joy is present even in trouble

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

Section D
Wisdom and Knowledge

God gives his people wisdom and knowledge

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

He [Jesus] answered them, *"You have been given knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom of heaven …* Matthew 13:11a ISV

God's people are given spiritual sight

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

Ephesians 1:17-19 NET

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

God opens his people's eyes to spiritual truth.

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 19

God's Care of His People

I. God's Saving of His People

A. God's Capacity to Save His People

B. God Saves His People – from All Things

C. God Helps His People against Enemies

II. God's Preservation of His People

A. God Meets His People's Needs

B. God Strengthens His People

C. God Protects His People

Part I

God's Saving of His People

See also:

- 13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

God has the capacity to save his people always – no matter what the circumstances. Thus God can save his people from all things – and ultimately he does. The Bible contains both examples of God saving his people and promises of him continuing to do so.

In reading this chapter about God's saving his people, bear in mind that the Bible also speaks of God's people experiencing sufferings common to all people (cf. 39. Hard Times) and also persecution for their faith (cf. 40. Persecution). God can and does save and preserve his people, but also does allow or even ordain difficult experiences for his people – often for reasons that may not be clear.

Promises given in the OT of God saving and preserving his people are still very much relevant under the new covenant – as is reflected in a number of NT passages. But they are more applicable in a spiritual sense – in keeping with the greater spiritual nature of the second covenant in contrast to the often more tangible aspects of the first covenant.

Section A

God's Capacity to Save His People

God is able to save his people – no matter what the odds

[Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to King Nebuchadnezzar:] *If you throw us into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us* from the furnace. He will save us from your power, O king. Daniel 3:17 NCV™

Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few. 1 Samuel 14:6b NET

God has mighty power to save his people

The LORD your God is with you; *the mighty One will save you.* Zephaniah 3:17a NCV™

Then *with his mighty power he led them out* [of captivity in Egypt], … Acts 13:17b CEV

God does not need to use any other means but himself

[God:] But I will show pity to the people of Judah. *I will save them, but not by using bows or swords, horses or horsemen, or weapons of war. I, the LORD their God, will save them.* Hosea 1:7 NCV™

Here God speaks of saving his people by no other power but himself.

Section B
God Saves His People – from All Things

God is the Savior of his people

[David, to God:] Guide me in your truth, and teach me, *my God, my Savior.* I trust you all day long. Psalms 25:5 NCV™

God saves his people out of all troubles

[David:] I sought the LORD's help and he answered me; *he delivered me from all my fears.* **5**Those who look to him for help are happy; their faces are not ashamed. **6**This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; *he saved him from all his troubles.* … **17**The godly cry out and the LORD hears; *he saves them from all their troubles.* … **19***The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them.* Psalms 34:4-6, 17, 19 NET

[Paul:] However, the Lord stood by me and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the gentiles could hear it. *I was rescued out of a lion's mouth.* **18***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. 2 Timothy 4:17-18 ISV

> Christ had rescued Paul from physical danger (v. 17) – in fact he had done so many times (cf. 3:11). However in light of vv. 6-8 which indicate that Paul's death was near, it appears that in v. 18 Paul is not this time referring to a physical rescue but a spiritual one – where the Lord would bring him "safely to his heavenly kingdom".

God sets his people free from things that imprison

[A psalmist, to God:] LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant and the son of your female servant. *You have freed me from my chains.* Psalms 116:16 NCV™

God's saving of his people makes known that he is the only God

[Moses, to the Israelites:] Or *has any god ever tried to come and take one nation away from another for himself? The LORD your God used his mighty hand and powerful arm to do this for you in Egypt. He did this using plagues, miraculous signs, amazing things, and war. He did his great and awe-inspiring deeds in*

front of you. [35]*You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD is God. There is no other god.* Deuteronomy 4:34-35 GW

Section C

God Helps His People against Enemies

God consistently helps his people

God is our refuge and strength, *an ever-present help in times of trouble*. Psalms 46:1 GW

[Paul:] *I have experienced help from God to this day …* Acts 26:22a NET

God helps his people by delivering them from enemies

The LORD helps them and rescues them; he rescues them from evil men and delivers them, for they seek his protection. Psalms 37:40 NET

[The writer, to believers:] So we can say with confidence, *"The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* Hebrews 13:6 NET

For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies

[Jahaziel, a Levite]: "Pay attention, all you people of Judah, residents of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Don't be afraid and don't panic because of this huge army! *For the battle is not yours, but God's. …* [17]*You will not fight in this battle. Take your positions, stand, and watch the LORD deliver you,* O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid and don't panic! Tomorrow march out toward them; the LORD is with you!'" … [22]When they began to shout and praise, *the LORD suddenly attacked the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were*

defeated. … [29]All the kingdoms of the surrounding lands were afraid of God when they heard how *the LORD had fought against Israel's enemies*.
2 Chronicles 20:15b, 17, 22, 29 NET

God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world

[Paul, to believers:] What then shall we say about these things? *If God is for us, who can be against us? …* [35]*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? …* [37]*No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!* Romans 8:31, 35, 37 NET

> Verse 31b implies that if God is for us then no one can effectively oppose us. In all adversity we have complete victory through Christ (v. 37).

God's people are enabled to overcome Satan

[John, to believers:] I have written to you, young people, that you are strong, and *the word of God resides in you, and you have conquered the evil one*. 1 John 2:14b NET

> The reference to the word of God living in these believers suggests that it played a significant role in them overcoming Satan. As such this points to God enabling his people to overcome Satan.

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

God's Preservation of His People

As with verses which speak of God's saving of his people, verses which speak of God's preservation of his people are amongst the best-loved verses in the Bible. They contain some of the Bible's great promises, which reassure us when we wonder if God has "lost our address". As such they provide good reason for God's people to trust in him and be at peace.

Section A

God Meets His People's Needs

God cares for his people

The LORD is good; he protects his people in times of trouble; *he takes care of those who turn to him.* Nahum 1:7 GNT

[Peter, to believers:] *Turn all your anxiety over to God because he cares for you.* 1 Peter 5:7 GW

> Note that this subsection points to the overall theme of this chapter. As such it is reflected in and pertinent to the whole chapter.

God meets his people's physical needs even in harsh situations

[Levites, to God:] *For forty years you sustained them. Even in the desert they never lacked anything. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.* Nehemiah 9:21 NET

[David, to God:] *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*; you anoint my head with oil; *my cup overflows*. Psalms 23:5 ESV

Even amidst adversaries, God provided for David – as implied by "prepare a table [feast] before me" and "my cup overflows".

God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Matthew 5:6 NET

Jesus said to them, *"I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.* John 6:35 NET

God provides for all their needs – they will not lack anything

[Paul, to believers who had supported him:] And *my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 4:19 NET

Then Jesus said to them [his disciples], *"When I sent you out with no money bag, or traveler's bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?" They replied, "Nothing."* Luke 22:35 NET

Section B
God Strengthens His People

God strengthens his people when they are weak

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; **31***but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with*

wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:30-31 ESV

God strengthens his people in the face of adversity

[David, to God:] *You give me strength for battle*; you make my foes kneel before me. Psalms 18:39 NET

[Paul:] *At my first defense no one appeared in my support; instead they all deserted me* – may they not be held accountable for it. **17***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! 2 Timothy 4:16-17 NET

> Note that in Paul's letters "Lord" is generally understood to be a reference to Jesus Christ.

God strengthens them spiritually, until Christ's return

[Paul, to believers:] *You are being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you might patiently endure everything with joy …* Colossians 1:11 ISV

[Paul, to believers:] *He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Corinthians 1:8 NET

Section C
God Protects His People

God protects his people

[Joshua, to the Israelites:] *He continually protected us as we traveled and when*

we passed through nations. Joshua 24:17b NET

God is a refuge for his people

He [David] said, *"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,* [3]*my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge,* my savior; you save me from violence. 2 Samuel 22:2-3 ESV

God guards his people

Look! The one who is guarding Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. [5]*The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade at your right side.* [6]*The sun will not ravage you by day, nor the moon by night.* [7]*The LORD will guard you from all evil, preserving your life.* [8]*The LORD will guard your goings and comings, from this time on and forever.* Psalms 121:4-8 ISV

God protects his people from all evil – including Satan

[David, to God:] *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* Psalms 23:4 ESV

[Paul, to believers:] But the Lord is faithful, and *he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.* 2 Thessalonians 3:3 NET

God will protect his people until the end

[Peter, to believers:] *God's power protects you through your faith until salvation is shown to you at the end of time.* 1 Peter 1:5 NCV™

God protects his faithful people from spiritual harm throughout their lives, bringing their salvation to fruition at the end of the age.

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 20

God's Plans for His People

I. General

A. God Has Plans for His People

B. God Fulfills His Plans for His People

C. God Works through His People

D. God Guides His People

II. God's Plans for Israel

A. Return to the Land

B. Physical Renewal and Peace

C. Spiritual Renewal

D. A Renewed Relationship with God

E. Glorification

Part I

General

God has wonderful plans and purposes for his people. Many of these concern the work he does through his people, with his incomparably great power. God promises to fulfill these plans and purposes, equipping and guiding his people accordingly.

Section A

God Has Plans for His People

Bear in mind that references to God's plans and purposes for his people include: general plans/purposes which apply to all Christians; and specific plans/purposes for each Christian. The various general ones – such as salvation and sanctification – are dealt with in other chapters in this book. This section looks at topics which show that God has specific plans and purposes for each of his people.

Thus the verses have largely been interpreted as such, i.e. as speaking of God having plans or purposes for specific people, or specific groups of his people. However, note that a number of the verses are also applicable to God's general plans and purposes, and arguably may even have these foremost in view.

God has plans and purposes for his people

[David, to God:] *You have made many wonderful plans for us. I could never speak of them all—their number is so great!* Psalms 40:5b GNT

For David, after *he had served God's purpose in his own generation*, died and was laid to rest with his ancestors, and so he experienced decay. Acts 13:36 ISV

These plans include work for God's people to do

[Paul, to believers:] God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus *he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.* Ephesians 2:10 GNT

[Paul, to the believers at Corinth:] What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in *the ministry the Lord gave us*. 1 Corinthians 3:5 NET

God's plans are not dependent upon his people's backgrounds

Amos replied to Amaziah, *"I was not a prophet by profession. No, I was a herdsman who also took care of sycamore fig trees.* **15***Then the LORD took me from tending flocks and gave me this commission, 'Go! Prophesy to my people Israel!'* Amos 7:14-15 NET

Section B
God Fulfills His Plans for His People

In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them

[David, to God:] *Though I walk straight into trouble*, you preserve my life, stretching out your hand to fight the vehemence of my enemies, and your right

hand delivers me. [8]*The LORD will complete what his purpose is for me.* Psalms 138:7-8a ISV

For the LORD says, 'Only *when the seventy years of Babylonian rule are over* will I again take up consideration for you. *Then I will fulfill my gracious promise to you and restore you to your homeland.* [11]*For I know what I have planned for you,' says the LORD. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.* Jeremiah 29:10-11 NET

Despite his people's exile in Babylon and the apparent decimation of Israel as a nation, God would fulfill his promise and plans for them.

God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people

Joseph told them to come closer to him, and when they did, he said: Yes, *I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.* [5]*Don't worry or blame yourselves for what you did. God is the one who sent me ahead of you to save lives.* [6]There has already been a famine for two years, and for five more years no one will plow fields or harvest grain. [7]But *God sent me on ahead of you to keep your families alive and to save you in this wonderful way.* [8]*After all, you weren't really the ones who sent me here—it was God.* He made me the highest official in the king's court and placed me over all Egypt. Genesis 45:4-8 CEV

Section C
God Works through His People

As mentioned earlier, God's plans and purposes for his people include tasks or work for his people to do for him. In fulfilling these plans and purposes, God works through his people.

God moves his people to do his work

[Paul, to believers:] Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, **13**because *God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose*. Philippians 2:12b-13 GNT

Then the leaders of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priests and the Levites – *all those whose mind God had stirred – got ready to go up in order to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem*. Ezra 1:5 NET

God equips his people for the work

[The writer, to believers:] Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, **21***equip you with every good thing to do his will*, working in us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21 NET

God helps and empowers them to do his work even if they feel inadequate

[Jeremiah:] I replied, *"Ah, LORD God! Look, I don't know how to speak, because I'm only a young man."* **7**Then the LORD told me, "Don't say, 'I'm only a young man,' for *you will go everywhere I send you, and you will speak everything I command you.* **8***Don't be afraid of them, because I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.* **9***The LORD stretched out his hand, touched my mouth, and then told me, "Look, I've put my words in your mouth.* **10***See, today I've appointed you to prophesy about nations and kingdoms, to pull up and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant*." Jeremiah 1:6-10 ISV

To signify that he had given (or would give) Jeremiah his words to

speak – and as part of his appointing and empowering of Jeremiah – God touched Jeremiah's mouth (v. 9). This may have occurred in a vision; some think it actually took place.

God's power for his people is great

With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all. Acts 4:33 NET

[Paul, to believers:] *You will also know the unlimited greatness of his power as it works with might and strength for us, the believers.* Ephesians 1:19 GW

Section D
God Guides His People

See also:

- The Holy Spirit leads God's people
- Being Guided by God

God guides his people always

The LORD will continually lead you; he will feed you even in parched regions. Isaiah 58:11a NET

He will guide us forever. Psalms 48:14b ESV

Note that the Bible speaks of God guiding his people in fulfilling his plans and purposes for them. More specifically, it tells of God guiding them in: living righteous lives; doing his work; and making choices in other matters.

God guides his people in difficult circumstances

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *He led you through that vast and terrifying desert where there were poisonous snakes and scorpions.* Deuteronomy 8:15a GNT

[David:] *When I am ready to give up, he knows what I should do.* Psalms 142:3a GNT

The implication of the second clause is that God not only knows but also guides in what one should do.

God guides his people in doing his work

The Holy Tent where God spoke to our ancestors was with them in the desert. *God told Moses how to make this Tent, and he made it like the plan God showed him.* Acts 7:44 NCV™

[Cornelius, to Peter:] So now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to *everything the Lord has commanded you to say to us.* Acts 10:33b NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

God's Plans for Israel

The OT prophets speak of a great, future renewal of Israel by God. Opinions differ as to whether these prophecies are literal and physical, as opposed to figurative or spiritual. If they are literal, then they speak of Israel and Jerusalem (or Zion), most likely immediately preceding and during the thousand years spoken of in Rev 20:1-7. As such the time of a renewed Israel would largely correspond with that of a physical universal rule of Jesus Christ and would precede the final judgment. If instead the prophecies are basically figurative and spiritual, then they are more likely to be referring to all believers – the "new" Israel. As such they would be portraying God's people and kingdom following Jesus Christ's mission and/or quite possibly anticipating heaven or the new Jerusalem.

In reading the following, bear in mind that some prophecies are understood to be progressively fulfilled throughout history, culminating in a final fulfillment at the end of the age. For example some passages refer to the Jew's return from exile in Babylon, but also appear to have a future era in view. Many probably also have an application to the experience of God's people in all periods. As such they are a great source of encouragement to all believers.

Note that while the subheadings speak of Israel, many of the verses refer to Jerusalem in particular.

Section A

Return to the Land

God will return home the remnant of exiled Israel

[God:] *I'll gather the remnant of my flock from all the countries where I've driven them, and bring them back to their pasture* where they'll be fruitful and increase in numbers. Jeremiah 23:3 ISV

Note that some commentators see a fulfillment of prophecies such as this one in the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

The people of Israel will possess the land forever

[God, to Jerusalem:] All of your people will be godly; *they will possess the land permanently*. Isaiah 60:21a NET

Section B
Physical Renewal and Peace

Israel will be physically restored

They [people] *will say, "This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; the ruined, desolate, and destroyed cities are now fortified and inhabited."*
36Then the nations which remain around you will know that *I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruins and replanted what was desolate*. I, the LORD, have spoken – and *I will do it!* Ezekiel 36:35-36 NET

Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel

Certainly the LORD will console Zion; he will console all her ruins. *He will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the Garden of the Lord. Happiness and joy will be restored to her, thanksgiving and the sound of music.*
Isaiah 51:3 NET

The Messiah will rule Israel forever in righteousness and peace

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:7 ESV

Israel will have lasting peace

[God:] *Fairness will produce peace and result in lasting security.* **18***My people will live in peaceful settlements, in secure homes, and in safe, quiet places.* Isaiah 32:17-18 NET

Section C
Spiritual Renewal

God will cleanse Israel of sin

[God, the people of Israel:] This is what the sovereign LORD says: *In the day I cleanse you from all your sins …* Ezekiel 36:33a NET

The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit

I will no longer hide my face from them, *when I pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the sovereign LORD.* Ezekiel 39:29 NET

Section D
A Renewed Relationship with God

God will be Israel's God and they will be his people

[God:] *I will be their God and they will be my people.* For they will wholeheartedly return to me. Jeremiah 24:7b NET

> This denotes the consummate fulfillment of a key aspect of the first covenant which God made with Israel – that he would be their God and they would be his people.

God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever

The LORD says, 'I have returned to Zion and will live within Jerusalem.
Zechariah 8:3a NET

The name of the city from that day forward will be: 'The LORD Is There.'
Ezekiel 48:35b NET

The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God

And so his name will be proclaimed in Zion, and *he will be praised in Jerusalem*
22*when nations and kingdoms come together and worship the LORD.* Psalms 102:21-22 GNT

Section E
Glorification

God will glorify Israel

Jerusalem, the nations will see your goodness, and all kings will see your glory.
Isaiah 62:2a NCV™

Israel’s renewal will display God’s glory

The desert and the dry land will be glad, and the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. [2]*Like a lily the land will blossom. It will rejoice and sing with joy. It will have the glory of Lebanon, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. Everyone will see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.* Isaiah 35:1-2 GW

God’s glory and majesty will be evident in Israel’s wonderful and glorious restoration.

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Volume II

What to Do

E. Relating to God

F. Church Life

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Unit 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

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23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

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Chapter 21

Being Right with God

I. Getting Right with God

A. God's Invitation

B. Repentance

C. Belief in Jesus Christ

D. Reasons for Assurance

II. Staying Right with God

A. The Need to Obey God

B. The Need for Good Deeds

C. Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

D. Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ

Part I

Getting Right with God

See also:

- Baptism

There are are two prominent themes in the NT regarding how to get “right with God”. These are repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.

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

Section A

God’s Invitation

God invites all people to come to him and be saved

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

God wants us to earnestly seek him

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

We must believe in God and what he says

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

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

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

We need to be open to believing and responding

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

Here Jesus refers to the humility, openness and receptiveness of little children. These characteristics are required to believe and respond to Jesus' message – and so enter God's kingdom.

Section B

Repentance

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

We must repent

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

Confess your sins . . .

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

. . . Turn from sin and do what is right

Turn away from evil and do what is right! Psalms 34:14a NET

Turn to God in repentance

[Paul:] I testified to both Jews and Greeks about *repentance toward God* and faith toward our Lord Jesus. Acts 20:21 ISV

Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins

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

Section C
Belief in Jesus Christ

See also:

- Confession of Jesus Christ

Believe in Jesus Christ

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

> Believing in Jesus involves believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his teaching and deeds; and his death and resurrection – including their significance. Key matters concerning who he is and the significance of his death and resurrection are mentioned below. Regarding the latter, primarily we are to believe that as a result of his death and resurrection, Jesus provides forgiveness of sins (and consequently righteousness, leading to eternal life). As such we are to trust in him for the forgiveness of our own sins.

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

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

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

Belief in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness of sins

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

Belief in Jesus Christ makes one righteous before God

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

Belief in Jesus Christ brings eternal life

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

Section D
Reasons for Assurance

The verses in this section give reasons for assurance of things such as being saved and being in a close relationship with God – and consequently give assurance of being made right with God.

Having the Holy Spirit

[Paul, to believers:] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but *you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father."* **16***The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children.* Romans 8:15-16 NET

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

Obedience to God

We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands. 1 John 2:3 NCV™

Love for other Christians

[John, to believers:] *We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers and sisters.* 1 John 3:14 GNT

Further reasons

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

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

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

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Part II

Staying Right with God

See also:

- By faith we stand firm

Having been made right with God, it is critical that we live in accordance with this standing, so as to stay right with God. The following topics deal with some key aspects involved in this, namely: obedience; good deeds; living by the Holy Spirit; and living "in" Jesus Christ.

Section A

The Need to Obey God

We need to obey God as well as believe

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

Obedience is critical for holiness and eternal life

[Paul, speaking to believers of being slaves in obedience to God:] Now you have been freed from sin and have *become God's slaves. This results in a holy life and, finally, in everlasting life.* Romans 6:22 GW

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

Section B
The Need for Good Deeds

True faith involves good deeds

Just as a person's body that does not have a spirit is dead, so faith that does nothing is dead! James 2:26 NCV™

Good deeds accompany salvation

[The writer, to believers:] Even though we speak like this, dear friends, *we are convinced of better things in your case, things that point to salvation.* **10**For God is not so unjust as to forget *your work and the love you have shown him as you have ministered to the saints and continue to minister to them.* Hebrews 6:9-10 ISV

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

But our deeds do not earn salvation, for it is by grace

[Paul, to believers:] For *by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;* **9***it is not from works, so that no one can boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9 NET

Good deeds are an effect rather than a cause of salvation.

Section C
Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

See also:

- Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

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

[Paul, to believers:] In the past, the law held us like prisoners, but our old selves died, and *we were made free from the law. So now we serve God in a new way with the Spirit, and not in the old way with written rules.* Romans 7:6 NCV™

Through what Christ accomplished, God's people have been freed from the Mosaic Law as the means of being right with him. We are instead to live by his Spirit. Living by the Holy Spirit involves: being alert and responsive to the Spirit's guidance; and relying on the Spirit's power, to help and change us. Along with this, our minds should be focused on things of the Spirit (cf. Romans 8:5 below).

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

[Paul, to believers:] He [God] condemned sin in the flesh **4**so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who *do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* **5**For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but *those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* Romans 8:3b-5 ISV

Here the term "flesh" denotes our sinful nature.

Inner righteousness is needed, not just compliance with rules

[Jesus:] *"You have heard that it was said to an older generation, 'Do not murder,' and 'whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.' **22**But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. … **27**"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' **28**But I say to you that*

whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:21-22a, 27-28 NET

Section D
Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ

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

See also:

- Being 'in' Jesus Christ

Live "in" Jesus Christ by faith

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

> Paul appears to associate having a firm faith in Christ (vv. 5, 7) with living in Christ (v. 6) and being "rooted and built up in him" (v. 7).

Live "in" Jesus Christ by holding to his teachings

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *If you remain in me and my words remain in you*, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. … **10***If you obey my*

commandments, *you will remain in my love*, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. John 15:7, 10 NET

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

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Chapter 22

Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope

A. What Faith Is

B. What to Have Faith For

C. The Importance of Faith

D. Hope in God

II. What Not to Do

A. Do Not Lack Faith

B. Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

C. Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

D. Do Not Worry

E. Do Not Trust in Other Things

Part I

Faith and Hope

Faith in God is absolutely fundamental to the Christian life. We 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.

Section A
What Faith Is

Faith involves believing in God

[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.* 1 Peter 1:21 NCV™

This links belief with faith (and hope). As such, it reflects that having faith in God involves believing in him. Such belief includes believing what he says.

We must also trust in God

Trust in him at all times, you people! Psalms 62:8a 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.

Section B
What to Have Faith For

Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises

[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 **24**and 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.' **25**Therefore keep up your courage, men, for *I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told*.
Acts 27:23-25 NET

[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.
2 Peter 3:13 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

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*. Isaiah 50:10 GNT

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,* **34***put out raging fires, escaped death by the sword, found strength in weakness, became powerful in battle, and routed foreign armies.* Hebrews 11:32-34 ISV

> Various people of God are shown here to have had faith that God would take care of them when facing powerful enemies and other very difficult circumstances.

Have faith that God will do what you ask

[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.* Psalms 5:3 NET

As Jesus went on from there, *two blind men followed him, shouting, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"* **28**When 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.* Matthew 9:27-30a NET

Section C
The Importance of Faith

By faith we stand firm

[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*.

2 Corinthians 1:24 NET

Faith produces obedience to God

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. Hebrews 11:8 NET

Faith produces work in service to God

[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. 1 Thessalonians 1:3a NCV™

Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests

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

They [Israelite soldiers] cried out to God during the battle; *he responded to their prayers because they trusted in him.* 1 Chronicles 5:20b NET

If we have faith nothing will be impossible

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we cast it [a demon] out?" **20**He 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."* Matthew 17:19-20 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.

Section D
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.

Set your hope on God's care

[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.*
2 Corinthians 1:10 ESV

[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.* 1 Timothy 6:17 GNT

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

[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.* Titus 2:13 GW

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. 1 Peter 1:13 NET

Hope is vital for faith

[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 … Colossians 1:5 NET

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

> The hope Christians have is not a groundless longing, but a confident assurance. Such hope stimulates and supports ongoing faith, which has as its focus that for which we hope.

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Part II

What Not to Do

To live a life of faith, we need to avoid things which cause us to lack faith in God. These include doubt, fear, worry and trusting in other things. Some verses which encourage believers not to be afraid or worry are amongst the best-loved verses in the Bible.

Section A

Do Not Lack Faith

Do not be lacking in faith

Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped. **38**But he [Jesus] was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?" **39**So 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. **40**And he said to them, *"Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?"* Mark 4:37-40 NET

Do not doubt

Immediately, Jesus reached out, caught hold of him [Peter], and said, *"You have so little faith! Why did you doubt?"* Matthew 14:31 GW

[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.* James 1:6 NET

The “wave” imagery depicts weak faith that wavers between belief of sorts (as shown in asking) and unbelief (as shown in doubting).

Section B
Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

Do not be afraid – trust in God

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

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

Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous

[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.* **7***Only 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. … **9***“I’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.”* Joshua 1:6-7, 9, 18b ISV

Section C
Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

God is far more powerful than our enemies

[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.* **8***He 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. 2 Chronicles 32:7-8 NET

God is always with his people

[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!" …* **8***The 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!* Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 NET

God helps his people

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

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

Section D

Do Not Worry

Do not worry – trust God with your concerns

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

Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 GNT

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

[Jesus:] So then, *don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'* **32**For the unconverted pursue these things, and *your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* **33***But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* **34***So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.* Matthew 6:31-34 NET

Section E

Do Not Trust in Other Things

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

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.* Psalms 118:8-9 NET

Do not trust in yourself

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

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

Do not trust in riches

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

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 23

Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

I. Loving and Fearing God

A. Love God

B. The Importance of Loving God

C. Fear God

D. Why God Should Be Feared

E. The Importance of Fearing God

II. Obeying God

A. Obey God

B. How to Obey God

C. Follow Jesus Christ

Part I

Loving and Fearing God

Love and fear are two emotions or attitudes that we should have towards God, and arguably they stand alone as such. The Bible states that loving God is of the utmost importance. Fearing God is also shown to be critical. Like loving God, understanding and having the fear of God that the Bible teaches, benefits us in many ways.

Note that both love and fear of God are closely associated with obeying him (the theme of the second half of this chapter). They are very strong, compelling emotions and provide the primary emotional stimuli for obeying God (cf. Deuteronomy 10:12-13) – supplementing intellectual stimuli arising out of such things as faith. Moreover, the Bible indicates that our love and fear of God are actually expressed primarily in obeying him.

Section A

Love God

Love God and Jesus Christ

Love the LORD, all you faithful followers of his! Psalms 31:23a NET

Grace be with all of those who *love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love*. Ephesians 6:24 NET

Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them

We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard

to follow. 1 John 5:3 CEV

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him. John 14:23 NET

Love for God is linked with loving other Christians

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is God's child, and *whoever loves the Father also loves the Father's children*. 1 John 5:1 NCV™

Everyone who loves God will naturally love his children as well.

Section B

The Importance of Loving God

Loving God is of the utmost importance

Jesus said to him, *"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* **38***This is the first and greatest commandment.* **39**The second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **40***All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."* Matthew 22:37-40 NET

God and Jesus Christ love those who love them

[Jesus:] *The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him* and will reveal myself to him. John 14:21b NET

Note that the last clause refers to Jesus Christ revealing himself to those who love him, along with loving them.

Section C
Fear God

Fearing God is more than just having reverence for him. A sound appreciation of God's holiness and wrath, along with his supreme power, produces a genuine fear of incurring his displeasure. But this does not involve anxiety or terror for those who seek to please him and who understand his grace.

Clearly, fearing God moves us to obey him. It also evokes and supplements such things as worship and service, and even trust. When we grasp the concepts involved and willingly do fear God, we learn to gladly do so, even treasuring verses that call us to fear God.

Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him

[A psalmist, to God:] *My flesh trembles out of fear of you,* and I am in awe of your judgments. Psalms 119:120a ISV

Worship the LORD in holy attire! *Tremble before him, all the earth!* Psalms 96:9 NET

Do not fear anything but God

[God, to Isaiah:] People are saying that others make plans against them, but you should not believe them. *Don't be afraid of what they fear; do not dread those things.* **13***But remember that the LORD All-Powerful is holy. He is the one you should fear; he is the one you should dread.* Isaiah 8:12-13 NCV™

> Note that if a person truly fears God, they are practically unable to fear anyone or anything else.

God's people should not live in fear of his punishment

[John, to believers:] God is love, and those who live in love live in union with God and God lives in union with them. **17***Love is made perfect in us in order that we may have courage on Judgment Day; and we will have it because our life in this world is the same as Christ's.* **18***There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.* 1 John 4:16b-18 GNT

In v. 18 "love" appears to be referring to the love of God that is manifested in the Christian – the love that God has for them and they in turn show to others (v. 16), revealing themselves to be like God or Christ (v. 17b). Knowing and expressing such love drives out anxious fear of punishment from God (v. 18) – particularly as those who live in love live in God, and God in them (v. 16b). Knowledge of such love cannot coexist with anxious fear of God's punishment; they are incompatible, both logically and experientially. As such we can look towards Judgment Day with courage and confidence (v. 17).

Having a godly fear of God's punishment is a good thing, as it leads us to spurn sin and to not turn away from God. However, living with God's love – and under his grace – believers ought not live in anxious fear of God's punishment.

Section D
Why God Should Be Feared

God's surpassing greatness and sovereignty

There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. **7***Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among*

all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you. Jeremiah 10:6-7 ESV

God's anger and judgment

[A psalmist, to God:] But you, *you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?* **8***From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still,* **9***when God arose to establish judgment,* to save all the humble of the earth. Psalms 76:7-9 ESV

God's holiness

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name, because you alone are holy? Revelation 15:4a NET

> God's holiness involves his separateness from and intolerance of that which is morally impure, with the latter leading to his judgment. Thus God's holiness – awesome in itself – and its grave implications give good reason to fear him.

Section E
The Importance of Fearing God

Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him . . .

[A wise teacher:] *Fear God and keep his commandments,* because this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13b NET

. . . Fearing God compels one to avoid sin

Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, *so the*

fear of him may be present with you in order that you don't sin." Exodus 20:20 ISV

Fear of God leads to life

Fearing the LORD leads to life, and one who does so will live satisfied; he will not be afflicted by calamity. Proverbs 19:23 NET

> OT verses (such as this one) which speak of fearing God leading to "life", generally have in view: life as opposed to premature death; and/or a fullness of life.

Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! Psalms 111:10 ISV

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Obeying God

See also:

- The Need to Obey God

The concept of obeying God permeates the whole Bible – the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. It is fundamental to a functional and healthy relationship with God. A related concept is that of following Jesus Christ, which likewise is relevant to all aspects of the Christian's life.

Note that the second half of *21. Being Right with God – II. Staying Right with God* – begins with key teaching underlining the need to obey God.

Section A

Obey God

Obey God always – forever

[A psalmist, to God:] *I am determined to obey your statutes at all times, to the very end.* Psalms 119:112 NET

We should obey God because of what he has done for us

[A psalmist, referring to God's deeds for Israel:] *When he led his people out, they rejoiced; his chosen ones shouted with joy.* **44***He handed the territory of nations over to them, and they took possession of what other peoples had produced,* **45***so that they might keep his commands and obey his laws.* Praise the LORD!

Psalms 105:43-45 NET

> We should obey God because of all that he has done for us and moreover because our obedience is in fact one of the chief objectives of all his deeds for us (v. 45a). A corollary of this is that if we do not obey we will forfeit God's blessings which are a key part of all the things he does for us.

We should obey God because he is our God . . .

[God, to the Israelites:] *I am the LORD your God; follow my statutes, observe my regulations, and carry them out.* Ezekiel 20:19 NET

. . . It is no good expressing commitment without obeying

[Jesus, to those who merely professed him as their Lord:] *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do what I tell you?* Luke 6:46 NET

Section B

How to Obey God

See also:

- Faith produces obedience to God
- Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him . . .
- Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

Persistently read God's commands

It [a copy of God's law] *must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives*, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the

words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. Deuteronomy 17:19 NET

This instruction is given for the king, but is relevant to all people.

Do what you learn of God's law and word

For *Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it* and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. Ezra 7:10 ESV

[Jesus:] *Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.* Matthew 7:24 NET

Ask God to help you follow his commands

Teach me, O LORD, the lifestyle prescribed by your statutes, so that I might observe it continually. **34***Give me understanding so that I might observe your law, and keep it with all my heart.* **35***Guide me in the path of your commands, for I delight to walk in it.* **36***Give me a desire for your rules*, rather than for wealth gained unjustly. Psalms 119:33-36 NET

Submit yourself to God

So *submit to God*. James 4:7a NET

To persistently obey God, we need to first submit to him.

Obey God wholeheartedly

[A psalmist, to God:] Arrogant people smear my reputation with lies, but *I observe your precepts with all my heart.* Psalms 119:69 NET

Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *This commandment I am giving you today is not too difficult for you*, nor is it too remote. Deuteronomy 30:11 NET

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

> The term “yoke” probably alludes to that which lay across the necks of oxen. In saying that the “yoke” and “load” of following him is “easy” and “not hard to carry” (v. 30), Jesus may be referring to the fact that as he is “gentle and humble in heart” (v. 29) he will not require anything that is beyond us.

Section C
Follow Jesus Christ

Follow Jesus Christ

[Jesus, to Peter and Andrew:] *“Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people.” **20**They left their nets immediately and followed him.* Matthew 4:19b-20 NET

> To follow Jesus Christ involves not just simply following his commands, but also following him and his example. In doing so, we follow Christ not only as our leader, but also in companionship with him. This concept is an important aspect of discipleship.

Be a disciple of Jesus Christ

Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, *“If you continue to*

follow my teaching, you are really my disciples … John 8:31 NET

A disciple is one who seeks to learn and follow the teachings of another, even to the extent of becoming like the teacher (as reflected in the following subsection).

Follow Jesus Christ's example

[Jesus, to his disciples:] For *I have given you an example – you should do just as I have done for you*. John 13:15 NET

Make Jesus Christ your Lord

But *set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts* and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. 1 Peter 3:15 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 24

Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God

A. Seek God

B. Focus on God

C. Meet with God and Live before Him

D. Know God

II. Praying to God

A. The Power of Prayer

B. Praying before God

C. Making Requests

D. God’s Response to Requests

Part I

Being Close to God

Being or growing close to God involves consciously seeking God and focusing on him. Additionally, we can actually meet with God and also should live throughout each day in awareness of his presence. In growing close to God, we come to know him – the importance of which is emphatically stated by the Bible.

Section A
Seek God

"Seeking" typically entails intense effort, which is very much applicable to seeking God and fellowship with him. Seeking God also requires prayer, worship and obedience – along with persistently focusing on God, as per the following section, *Focus on God*.

Seek God wholeheartedly

Now *seek the LORD your God wholeheartedly and with your entire being!*
1 Chronicles 22:19a NET

[A psalmist, to God:] *With all my heart I seek you*. Do not allow me to stray from your commands! Psalms 119:10 NET

If you seek God wholeheartedly, you will find him

[Moses, to the Israelites:] But *if you seek the LORD your God from there* [in exile], *you will find him, if, indeed, you seek him with all your heart and soul*.

Deuteronomy 4:29 NET

Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him

He [Asa] *ordered Judah to seek the LORD God of their ancestors and to observe his law and commands.* 2 Chronicles 14:4 NET

Seeking God brings great blessings

Even young lions sometimes lack food and are hungry, but *those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.* Psalms 34:10 NET

The LORD is good to those who trust in him, to the one who seeks him. Lamentations 3:25 NET

Section B
Focus on God

See also:

- Persistently meditate on God's word and commands

Keep thinking about God

[David, to God:] *I remember you while I'm lying in bed; I think about you through the night.* Psalms 63:6 NCV™

[David, to God:] For *I am ever aware of your faithfulness, and your loyalty continually motivates me.* Psalms 26:3 NET

Keep thinking about what God has done

[David, to God:] I recall the old days; *I meditate on all you have done; I reflect on your accomplishments*. Psalms 143:5 NET

Section C
Meet with God and Live before Him

Come before God, meeting with him

[Moses, to leaders of Israel:] … when *all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God* in the place he chooses, you must read this law before them within their hearing. Deuteronomy 31:11 NET

Like the Israelites came before God, believers can both corporately and individually come before God, in awareness of his presence, to meet with him. Individual Christians typically do this daily – reading the Bible, praying and even meditating.

Live before God . . .

Paul said, "Brothers, *I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day*." Acts 23:1b ESV

We are to constantly live before God in the sense of living in awareness of his presence, companionship, help and discernment of our lives. As such we should think, speak and act accordingly.

. . . "Walk" with God

He [Noah] *walked with God.* Genesis 6:9 NET

To "walk" with God involves living before him. It suggests a personal and interactive relationship, inclusive of such things as prayer and trust

in God.

Section D
Know God

Know God and Jesus Christ

[John, to believers:] I write to you, children, because *you know the Father.* I write to you, parents, because *you know the One who existed from the beginning* [Christ]. 1 John 2:14a NCV™

[God:] If people want to boast, they should boast about this: They should boast that they *understand and know me*. They should boast that they *know and understand that I, the LORD, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth* and that I desire people to do these things," says the LORD. Jeremiah 9:24 NET

We are to understand and know God – which includes appreciating that he acts in "faithfulness, fairness, and justice".

Knowing God is linked to obeying his commands

Now *by this we know that we have come to know God: if we keep his commandments.* **4***The one who says "I have come to know God" and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar*, and the truth is not in such a person.
1 John 2:3-4 NET

Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others

[John, to believers:] Dear friends, *let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God.* **8***The*

person who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:7-8 NET

He [King Josiah] *upheld the cause of the poor and needy.* So things went well for Judah.' *The LORD says, 'That is a good example of what it means to know me.'* Jeremiah 22:16 NET

> Knowing God is manifested in caring for the poor and needy, amongst other things. Note that like 1 John 4:7-8 above, this verse may be implying that one who knows God reflects his character and deeds.

Knowing God is vital for understanding

Wisdom begins with respect for the LORD, and *understanding begins with knowing the Holy One*. Proverbs 9:10 NCV™

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Praying to God

See also:

- Praying in Hard Times

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges and one of the greatest responsibilities of being a Christian. It is also one of the main sources of vitality for our lives as Christians, and is critical to our effectiveness in our endeavors for God's kingdom. At the end of our lives, quite possibly many of us will see prayer as the main thing that we should have done more often. As the saying goes: "Life is short; pray hard."

Section A

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is very powerful

The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness. **17***Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months!* **18***Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land sprouted with a harvest.* James 5:16b-18 NET

If we ask God for things, he will give them (or do them)

[Jesus:] *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you.* **8***For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.* Matthew 7:7-8 NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] Again, I tell you the truth, *if two of you on earth agree about whatever you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.* **20**For where two or three are assembled in my name, I am there among them. Matthew 18:19-20 NET

> The tremendous promises of answered prayer in this subsection are obviously not an automatic guarantee that every request will be granted. Amongst other things, such prayer must be consistent with God and Christ's purpose and will – which Jesus may have in view here with his reference to those asking being "assembled in my name" (v. 20). Nevertheless, such wonderful promises should greatly encourage us to pray fervently and persistently.

Section B
Praying before God

Pray before God, in his presence

[Solomon, to God:] Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to *the prayer that your servant prays before you* this day, … 1 Kings 8:28 ESV

[Nehemiah:] I fasted and *prayed in the presence of the God of Heaven*. Nehemiah 1:4b ISV

> To pray "before" God (cf. 1Ki 8:28 ↑) effectively means to pray in his presence (cf. Neh 1:4b ↑), being mindful of his presence.

Pray to God as a caring father

Therefore, *this is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven,* may your name

be kept holy. Matthew 6:9 ISV

Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? **10**Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **11**If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!* Matthew 7:9-11 NET

Having a holy and loving Father in heaven should inspire us to make requests of him, doing so in awareness of him being such a Father. Note that the term “evil” (v. 11) is used here in a relative sense, in comparison to God and his standards, rather than in a general sense.

Pray in the Holy Spirit

But dear friends, use your most holy faith to build yourselves up, *praying in the Holy Spirit*. Jude 1:20 NCV™

Having the Holy Spirit, believers are to pray “in the Holy Spirit”. As such we are to consciously rely on the Holy Spirit’s help, to empower and guide us in our prayers.

Be reverent when praying

[Paul:] *I kneel in prayer to the Father.* Ephesians 3:14 CEV

Kneeling in prayer – “fall to my knees and pray” (NLT) – is indicative of reverence for God, and submission to him.

Section C
Making Requests

Ask for things in Jesus Christ’s “name”

[Jesus, to his disciples:] On that day, you will not ask me for anything. Truly, I tell all of you with certainty, *whatever you ask the Father for in my name, he will give it to you. …* **26***On that day, you will ask in my name.* John 16:23, 26a ISV

> In Jewish thought, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their nature, authority and purpose/s. As such, to ask in Jesus Christ's "name" is to do so in accordance with all that his name signifies. It is prayer that is compatible with Jesus Christ himself and his purposes – and made on his authority.
>
> When praying, people often use the phrase "in Jesus Christ's name" (or "in Jesus' name") to signify that they are asking for something in Jesus Christ's "name". The usage of the phrase does not by itself mean that the prayer is necessarily in accordance with Jesus Christ's "name". Along with being conscious of and acknowledging Jesus Christ's authority and role in our making of requests to God, the content of the prayer is also at issue. Thus asking for things in Jesus Christ's "name" concerns both how we ask and what we ask.
>
> Bear in mind that the deeper one's relationship with Jesus Christ becomes, the better-equipped one becomes to make requests of God in Jesus Christ's "name".
>
> Note that in the above verses, "On that day" (vv. 23, 26a) refers to the time following Jesus' ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost –inclusive of the present age.

Ask earnestly and persistently

I cried out with all my heart, "Answer me, O LORD! Psalms 119:145a NET

Jesus told his disciples a story about how they should keep on praying and never give up: … Luke 18:1 CEV

Do not doubt but believe that what you ask will be granted

Now early in the morning, as he [Jesus] returned to the city, he was hungry. **19**After noticing a fig tree by the road he went to it, but found nothing on it except leaves. He said to it, “Never again will there be fruit from you!” And the fig tree withered at once. **20**When the disciples saw it they were amazed, saying, “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” **21**Jesus answered them, “I tell you the truth, *if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.* **22***And whatever you ask in prayer, if you believe, you will receive.”* Matthew 21:18-22 NET

> Belief is vital in petitioning God, particularly in regard to things that seem impossible, as Jesus figuratively points out (v. 21). But belief is not merely making yourself “believe” what you do not really believe. Instead, it involves an understanding of God’s will and genuinely trusting in God to fulfill his will (cf. ZBC).

Give thanks when asking

Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, *through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God*. Philippians 4:6 NET

Section D

God’s Response to Requests

God answers those who obey and please him

[John, to believers:] Dear friends, *if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence in the presence of God,* **22***and whatever we ask we receive from*

him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing to him. 1 John 3:21-22 NET

> The clause “if our conscience does not condemn us” (v. 21) refers to having a clear conscience before God, from obeying and pleasing him (v. 22b).

God grants anything we ask that is in accordance with his will

[John, to believers:] And this is the confidence that we have before him: that *whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* **15***And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him.* 1 John 5:14-15 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 25

Exalting God

I. Instructions

A. Glorify and Honor God

B. Do Not Dishonor God

C. Praise and Thank God

D. How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General

E. How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

II. Reasons to Exalt God

A. Aspects of God's Being

B. Aspects of God's Character

C. What God Does in the World

D. What God Does for His People

Part I

Instructions

We exalt God by doing such things as glorifying, honoring, praising and thanking him. Exalting God is a very common theme in the Bible and should also be a prominent part of our lives. In fact the Bible tells us to praise and thank God constantly. The significance of exalting God is underlined by the first answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism which says: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Section A

Glorify and Honor God

Give glory to God

[Paul, to the Roman church:] Then you will all be joined together, and you will *give glory to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Romans 15:6 NCV™

Honor God

[David, to God:] *I will honor your name continually!* Psalms 86:12b NET

Glorify and honor God by praise and thanksgiving

[Daniel:] Then *I gave praise to the Most High God; I gave honor and glory to him who lives forever*. God’s rule is forever, and his kingdom continues for all time. Daniel 4:34b NCV™

[David:] I will praise God in a song and will *honor him by giving thanks*. Psalms 69:30 NCV™

Glorify and honor God by how you live

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, *do everything for the glory of God*. 1 Corinthians 10:31 NET

Whoever mistreats the poor insults their Maker, but *whoever is kind to the needy honors God*. Proverbs 14:31 NCV™

God's people are identified with him and so their lives are in a sense a reflection on God. Thus they should seek to do everything in a way that will bring glory and honor to God.

Section B
Do Not Dishonor God

Do not dishonor God by your actions

[Agur:] But if I am poor, I might *steal and bring disgrace on my God*. Proverbs 30:9b GNT

By ungodly actions God's people can bring dishonor to God. This is particularly so when the actions are known to others, as it publicly reflects badly on God as the one to whom his people belong.

Do not blaspheme God

You must not blaspheme God … Exodus 22:28a NET

Blaspheming God is to speak – or act – in a way that detracts from the honor of God.

Do not treat God with contempt

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to trust me in spite of all the miraculous signs I have done among them? … [23]*None of those who treat me with contempt will see it!* Numbers 14:11, 23 GW

To treat God with contempt is demeaning and dishonoring to God. Note that v. 23 refers to not seeing the promised land.

Section C
Praise and Thank God

Praise God constantly

Through him [Jesus Christ] then *let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*, that is, the fruit of our lips, acknowledging his name. Hebrews 13:15 NET

[David:] *I will praise the LORD at all times; my mouth will continually praise him.* Psalms 34:1 NET

Give thanks to God always

Rejoice always, [17]pray without ceasing, [18]*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV

Section D
How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General

In righteousness

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Psalms 33:1 ESV

For our praise and thanksgiving to be valid and acceptable to God, we must strive to live lives that are “righteous” and “upright”.

Wholeheartedly

[David:] *I will thank the LORD with all my heart!* Psalms 9:1a NET

Through prayer

In the same way that he [Daniel] had always done, *he knelt down in prayer three times a day, giving thanks to God*. Daniel 6:10b CEV

Through singing

Sing praises to God. Sing praises. Psalms 47:6a NCV™

Section E
How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

To rejoice is to be glad or joyful. By focusing on God, his promises and the wonderful things he has done, we cannot help but be filled with joy – and so we rejoice. This is typically done in conjunction with praising and thanking God.

Rejoice when giving praise and thanks to God

Sing to God! Sing praises to his name! Exalt the one who rides on the clouds! For the LORD is his name! *Rejoice before him!* Psalms 68:4 NET

You godly ones, *rejoice in the LORD! Give thanks to his holy name*. Psalms 97:12 NET

Rejoice in God always

[Ethan, speaking to God of worshipers:] *They rejoice in your name all day long*, and are vindicated by your justice. Psalms 89:16 NET

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Philippians 4:4 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Reasons to Exalt God

The Bible is bulging with good reasons for which to exalt God. Generally speaking, these compelling reasons or things for which to exalt God, concern what God is like and what he does.

Section A

Aspects of God's Being

God's glory

"Praise the glory of the LORD in heaven above!" Ezekiel 3:12b GNT

God's greatness

Praise him for his surpassing greatness! Psalms 150:2b NET

God's power

Praise him for his mighty acts! Psalms 150:2a NET

[Paul, to believers:] *Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think,* **21***to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* Ephesians 3:20-21 NET

God's wisdom and knowledge

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How

unsearchable are his judgments and how fathomless his ways! **34***For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? …* **36***… To him be glory forever! Amen.* Romans 11:33-34, 36b NET

Section B

Aspects of God's Character

God's holiness

Praise the LORD our God! Worship on his holy hill, for the LORD our God is holy! Psalms 99:9 NET

God's holiness – in which he is set apart from all others in his purity and righteousness – should evoke awe, praise and worship.

God's love and faithfulness

[David, to God:] *I will give you thanks before the nations, O Master! I will sing praises to you before foreigners!* **10***For your loyal love extends beyond the sky, and your faithfulness reaches the clouds.* Psalms 57:9-10 NET

God's mercy

People who are not Jewish *praise God for his mercy* as well. Romans 15:9a GW

This has in view what God has done for all people through Christ.

Section C

What God Does in the World

God's creative work

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!" Revelation 4:11 NET

God's provision of water and food

Offer to the LORD a song of thanks! Sing praises to our God to the accompaniment of a harp! **8***He covers the sky with clouds, provides the earth with rain, and causes grass to grow on the hillsides.* **9***He gives food to the animals, and to the young ravens when they chirp.* Psalms 147:7-9 NET

God's reign

[John, describing a vision:] Then I heard what sounded like the voice of a vast throng, like the roar of many waters and like loud crashes of thunder. They were *shouting: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the All–Powerful, reigns!* Revelation 19:6 NET

> "Hallelujah" is a call to praise God, often used itself as an expression of praise to God.

God's word

[David:] In *God, whose word I praise,* in *the LORD, whose word I praise,* **11**in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. Psalms 56:10-11a ESV

Section D

What God Does for His People

God's salvation through Christ and the associated blessings . . .

[Zechariah, speaking of the salvation that would come through Jesus:] *Praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to save his people.* **69***Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant.* Luke 1:68-69 CEV

[Paul, to believers:] *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world.* Ephesians 1:3 NCV™

> The phrase "in the heavenly world" may be indicating that the blessings are ones that we will experience in the afterlife. Alternatively, the phrase is possibly emphasizing the heavenly and eternal dimension of spiritual blessings that we have now.

. . . in which one should rejoice

[Peter, to believers:] You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but *you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,* **9***because you are attaining the goal of your faith – the salvation of your souls.* 1 Peter 1:8-9 NET

God's deliverance from difficulties . . .

[David:] *I will thank you, LORD, because you are good.* **7***You have saved me from all my troubles*, and I have seen my enemies defeated. Psalms 54:6b-7 NCV™

. . . in which one should rejoice

At that time they [God's people at the end of the age] will say, "Look, here is our God! We waited for him and he delivered us. Here is the LORD! We waited for

him. *Let's rejoice and celebrate his deliverance!"* Isaiah 25:9 NET

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Unit 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

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29. Significant Practices

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30. Church Leadership

I. General

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Chapter 26

Being One Body

I. General

A. The Church as One Body

B. Be in Unison

C. Be in Fellowship

D. Love Each Other

II. Caring for the Body

A. Pray for Each Other (I): General

B. Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

C. Encourage Each Other

D. Help Each Other

Part I

General

The New Testament deals extensively with how we should relate to other Christians and with issues vital for the life of the church. Amongst the most prominent themes are the need for unity and love. Fellowship is another important concept that we need to grasp, with it being involved in a number of aspects of church life.

Section A

The Church as One Body

Church members form one body – the body of Christ

[Paul, to the Corinthian church:] *A person's body is only one thing, but it has many parts. Though there are many parts to a body, all those parts make only one body. Christ is like that also. …* **27** *Together you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of that body.* 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27 NCV™

> The term "the body of Christ" figuratively depicts the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with his people. Moreover, it points to the unity Christ's people have together in their relationship with him. While the worldwide church is the whole "body of Christ", each local church is a form of "the body of Christ". And in each case the many members together make one body.

Being one body, church members meet together

[The writer, to believers:] *Let us not give up the habit of meeting together,* as

some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer. Hebrews 10:25 GNT

Church members function together as one church body

The men who were sent by the church went through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling how the Gentiles had turned to God. This news made the Lord's followers very happy. **4**When the men arrived in Jerusalem, *they were welcomed by the church*, including the apostles and the leaders. Acts 15:3-4a CEV

> This passage includes segments which illustrate churches functioning as one body – i.e. as a unit or cohesive community. The concept represented by the term "church" involves believers meeting together and functioning as a community or one spiritual body. As such, they worship God together and cohesively further the cause of their head, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they live in relationship with each other, in which they minister to each other.

Section B
Be in Unison

Be united as one

The group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but everything was held in common. Acts 4:32 NET

[Paul, to the church in Corinth:] I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose*. 1 Corinthians 1:10 NET

In the last clause, Paul urges his readers to be united by having the same Christ-centered thinking and objective/s.

Be at peace with each other

[Paul, to the church in Rome:] Therefore, *let's keep on pursuing those things that bring peace* and that lead to building one another up. Romans 14:19 ISV

Submit to one another

[Paul, to the church in Ephesus:] *Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.* Ephesians 5:21 GNT

Avoid foolish arguments and quarreling

[Paul, to Timothy:] *Stay away from foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they grow into quarrels.* **24***And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel* but must be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and patient. 2 Timothy 2:23-24 NCV™

Section C
Be in Fellowship

The concept of "fellowship" involves sharing and participating in a partnership concerning a mutual interest or purpose, which for believers is their common faith and life in Christ. This is shown in the Greek word translated as "fellowship" ("koinonia") which emphasizes participation. Believers participate in Christ and church activities, and in each other's lives.

Have fellowship together – and with the Father and Jesus Christ

[John, to believers:] What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so *that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ).* 1 John 1:3 NET

This shows that the fellowship believers have together is not only based on their mutual relationship in Jesus Christ, but is also a fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Participate together in church activities

They [the disciples] *gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.* Acts 1:14 GNT

[Paul, to the church in Corinth:] I urge you **16**also to submit to people like this, and to *everyone who cooperates in the work and labors hard.* 1 Corinthians 16:15b-16 NET

Church members should participate together in God's work, cooperating with each other.

Share together in the sufferings that come because of Christ

[Paul, to Timothy:] So *never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord* or be ashamed of me, his prisoner. *Instead, by God's power, join me in suffering for the sake of the Good News.* 2 Timothy 1:8 GW

Share in each other's joy and troubles

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Romans 12:15

NET

Fellow believers may well be primarily in view here.

Section D
Love Each Other

See also:

- 31. Love

Love each other as Christ loved us, even laying down his life

[Jesus, to his disciples:] My commandment is this – to *love one another just as I have loved you.* **13***No one has greater love than this – that one lays down his life for his friends.* John 15:12-13 NET

Jesus disciples were to love each other as he had loved them, a love which he would show to be unsurpassed by laying down his life for them.

Loving other Christians is indicative of being of Christ and God

[Jesus, to his disciples:] "I give you a new commandment – to love one another. *Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* **35***Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another."* John 13:34-35 NET

[John, to believers:] Beloved, *let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. …* **12**No one has ever seen

God; *if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. …* **16***God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* 1 John 4:7, 12, 16b ESV

Love is the essence of God's nature – "God is love" (v. 16; cf. v. 8). Everyone who loves exhibits God's nature, demonstrating that they have been "born of God" (v. 7b). In addition, loving one another shows that we know God (v. 7), and that we live in God and he lives in us (vv. 12, 16b).

Love is expressed with actions

[John, to believers:] *Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God's love is not living in that person.* **18***My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring.* 1 John 3:17-18 NCV™

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Part II

Caring for the Body

The care that church members ought to show each other should be one of the defining characteristics of every church, evidencing Christian love. This care should include both spiritual and practical care, with the former largely involving prayer and encouragement.

Section A

Pray for Each Other (I): General

Pray constantly for each other

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

Pray for those facing persecution

[Paul:] Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, **19**for I know that *this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers* and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:18b-19 NET

> Paul speaks of the Philippians' prayers for him while he was imprisoned because of his work for God's kingdom (cf. v. 17).

Pray for those spreading the gospel

[Paul:] Finally, our brothers and sisters, *pray for us, that the Lord's message may continue to spread rapidly and be received with honor,* just as it was among you. 2 Thessalonians 3:1 GNT

Section B
Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

Ask that other believers will live as God wants

[Paul, to believers:] *We pray to God that you will not do anything wrong.*
2 Corinthians 13:7a NCV™

Pray for their spiritual growth and perfection

[Paul, to believers:] And *I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight* **10***so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ,* **11***filled with the fruit of righteousness* that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11 NET

Ask God to help and take care of them

[Solomon, to God:] *May you be attentive to your servant's and your people Israel's requests for help and may you respond to all their prayers to you.*
1 Kings 8:52 NET

[David, to God:] *Protect those who love you*; because of you they are truly happy. Psalms 5:11b GNT

Section C
Encourage Each Other

Encourage each other

Instead, *let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer*. Hebrews 10:25b GNT

Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say

He [Hezekiah] *encouraged them, saying,* **7** *"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.* **8** *He 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.* 2 Chronicles 32:6b-8 NET

When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you. Ephesians 4:29 NCV™

Encourage others to remain true to the Lord

When he [Barnabas] arrived, he rejoiced to see what the grace of God had done, and with a hearty determination *he continuously encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord*. Acts 11:23 ISV

Encourage and strengthen each other by what you do

[Paul, to the believers in Colosse:] *I want you to know what a struggle I am going through for you, for God's people at Laodicea, and for all of those followers who have never met me.* **2** *I do it to encourage them.* Then as their hearts are joined together in love, they will be wonderfully blessed with complete understanding. And they will truly know Christ. Colossians 2:1-2 CEV

[Paul, to believers:] We are speaking in Christ before God, and *everything we do,*

dear friends, is to build you up. 2 Corinthians 12:19b NET

Section D
Help Each Other

Be concerned for and compassionate towards each other

[Paul, speaking of the church body:] Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, [25]so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may *have mutual concern for one another*.
1 Corinthians 12:24b-25 NET

[Paul, to believers:] Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and loved, *clothe yourselves with compassion*, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
Colossians 3:12 ISV

Consequently, help each other

Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2 NET

God is always fair. He will remember *how you helped his people in the past and how you are still helping them*. You belong to God, and he won't forget the love you have shown his people. Hebrews 6:10 CEV

Share what you have with those in need

Share what you have with God's people who are in need. Be hospitable.
Romans 12:13 GW

All who believed were together and *held everything in common,* [45]*and they*

began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need. Acts 2:44-45 NET

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Chapter 27

Worshiping God

I. General

A. Worship God

B. Worshiping before God

C. Worshiping Together

II. Offerings

A. Reasons to Give to God

B. What to Give to God

C. How to Give to God

D. Righteousness and Making Offerings

Part I

General

See also:

- 25. Exalting God
- 28. Serving God

Worshiping God is one of the most important and fundamental duties of believers. It involves honoring him by acknowledging his worthiness, including his divine characteristics and wondrous deeds. This is done through such things as praise and thanksgiving, offered with adoration and reverence.

It is also done through offering our resources and even ourselves to God. The former is born out in the second half of this chapter. The latter is done largely through serving God. As such the following chapter on serving God is also pertinent to worshiping him.

Section A

Worship God

Worship God alone

Again, the devil took him [Jesus] to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their grandeur. **9***And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you throw yourself to the ground and worship me."* **10***Then Jesus said to him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: 'You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"* Matthew 4:8-10 NET

They [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego] *were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god other than their own.* Daniel 3:28b NCV™

Worship God for his glory and sovereignty

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! **8***Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!* **9***Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!* **10***Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!* Psalms 96:7-10a ESV

Worship God for his great deeds

All the nations, whom you created, *will come and worship you, O LORD. They will honor your name.* **10***For you are great and do amazing things.* You alone are God. Psalms 86:9-10 NET

Worship God for his creation of everything

He [an angel] declared in a loud voice: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has arrived, and *worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water!"* Revelation 14:7 NET

Worship God because of his care of his people

They bowed down and worshiped the Lord because they knew that he had seen their suffering and was going to help them. Exodus 4:31b CEV

Section B
Worshiping before God

Worship God in spirit

But a time is coming – and now is here – when the *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,* for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. **24***God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* John 4:23-24 NET

> To worship "in spirit" is primarily an inward activity, rather than being centered on the performing of rituals (which were prominent in OT worship). It involves one's spirit – and thus one's mind and will. To begin with, the heart and/or conscience of the worshiper must be right before God. Then one must be honest and open in approaching God (cf. John 4:23-24 ↑), and fully focused on God; obviously this needs to be done willingly. Not least, the worshiper must worship by the Holy Spirit (cf. Philippians 3:3). This involves being conscious of the Spirit, relying on the Spirit's enablement to commune with God and being open to the Spirit's promptings.

Worship God in reverence and awe

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus *let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,* **29***for our God is a consuming fire.* Hebrews 12:28-29 ESV

> The description of God as a "consuming fire" points to his power and preparedness to fierily devour or destroy that which is opposed to him and incompatible with his holiness.

Worship God with praise

Then the man knelt down and *worshipped the LORD.* **27***He said, "Praise the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has faithfully kept his promise to my master.* Genesis 24:26-27a GNT

Section C
Worshiping Together

Join with fellow believers in worshiping God

Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people replied “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands. *Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.* Nehemiah 8:6 NET

[A call to fellow Israelites:] *Come! Let’s bow down and worship! Let’s kneel before the LORD, our creator!* Psalms 95:6 NET

Offer praise and thanksgiving together

They [Israelites] *praised the LORD and gave thanks as they took turns singing: “The LORD is good! His faithful love for Israel will last forever.” Everyone started shouting and praising the LORD* because work on the foundation of the temple had begun. Ezra 3:11 CEV

Pray together

They [the apostles] *gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.* Acts 1:14 GNT

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Part II

Offerings

Making offerings to God of money and/or goods is an integral part of worshiping God. Moreover, the Bible gives a number of good reasons to give offerings to God. It also gives guidelines on what to give and how to give to God. Additionally, the Bible emphasizes the need for our lives to please God in order for our offerings to be acceptable to him.

Section A

Reasons to Give to God

Offerings are an important part of worshiping God

They will worship with sacrifices and food offerings. They will make vows to the LORD and carry them out. Isaiah 19:21b GW

Offerings acknowledge God's provision for us

[Moses, to the Israelites:] Count seven weeks from the time you start harvesting grain. **10***Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the Lord your God. Bring a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you.* Deuteronomy 16:9-10 GW

The people were to bring an offering of an amount that was in proportion to the size of the harvest that God had blessed them with. Today believers likewise offer a portion of what they have earned from their work.

Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance

[David:] O God, I have taken vows before you; therefore *I will offer thanksgiving sacrifices to you.* **13***For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living!* Psalms 56:12-13 ISV

Offerings support the service of God

The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the LORD, every man and woman whose heart was willing to bring materials for all the work that the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do. Exodus 35:29 NET

Section B
What to Give to God

Give the “firstfruits” to God

As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel *gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field*. 2 Chronicles 31:5 ESV

> The OT speaks of giving to God the first portion of what we produce, often referred to as the “firstfruits”. Today many believers emulate this by giving to God a portion of their wage on first receiving it. By this God’s provision and goodness is acknowledged in a way that honors him (cf. Proverbs 3:9) – putting him first, rather than simply offering him the leftovers that we can spare. Note also that offering the firstfruits to God was a statement, made in faith, that the rest of the harvest would take place – a principle also applicable today.

Give the best to God . . .

[A directive to the Israelites:] *You must bring the best of the firstfruits of your land to the Holy Tent of the LORD your God.* Exodus 23:19a NCV™

. . . Do not give what is inferior to God

[Directives to the Israelites:] *You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you.* Leviticus 22:201 ESV

Give all that you can

[Paul, speaking of the Macedonian churches:] They have been tested by great troubles, and *they are very poor. But they gave much because of their great joy.* **3***I can tell you that they gave as much as they were able and even more than they could afford.* 2 Corinthians 8:2-3a NCV™

And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, worth less than a penny. **43**He called his disciples and said to them, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the offering box than all the others. **44**For they all gave out of their wealth. But *she, out of her poverty, put in what she had to live on, everything she had.*" Mark 12:42-44 NET

Offer spiritual sacrifices

So *offer spiritual sacrifices that God accepts* through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5b GW

Through him then *let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*, that is, the fruit of our lips, acknowledging his name. Hebrews 13:15 NET

Section C

How to Give to God

Give willingly

[Paul, to believers:] *Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7 NET

Give generously

[Paul, to the Corinthian believers:] Therefore I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you in advance and to arrange ahead of time *the generous contribution* you had promised, so this may be ready as *a generous gift and not as something you feel forced to do*. **6**My point is this: *The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously.* 2 Corinthians 9:5-6 NET

Give regularly

[Paul, to believers:] *On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside some income* and save it to the extent that God has blessed you, so that a collection will not have to be made when I come. 1 Corinthians 16:2 NET

> This verse is quite probably speaking of money being brought to Christian gatherings held on the first day of every week.

Section D

Righteousness and Making Offerings

We must live righteously to acceptably worship God

[God:] *You, Israel, turn justice into poison and throw righteousness on the ground. …* [21]*I hate your festivals; I despise them. I'm not pleased with your religious assemblies. …* [23]*Spare me the sound of your songs. I won't listen to the music of your harps.* Amos 5:7, 21, 23 GW

Then they'll bring an offering in righteousness to the LORD. [4]*Then the offering to the LORD by Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable* as it was in the past, even as in former years. Malachi 3:3b-4 ISV

For any form of worship to be acceptable to God, including making offerings, we must live righteously, doing what is right.

Our offerings are not acceptable if our lives do not please God

[God, speaking of his unfaithful people:] For *they have paid no attention to what I have said, and they have rejected my law.* [20]*I take no delight when they offer up to me frankincense that comes from Sheba or sweet–smelling cane imported from a faraway land. I cannot accept the burnt offerings they bring me.* Jeremiah 6:19b-20a NET

We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him

[Paul:] I appeal to you: *offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.* Romans 12:1b GNT

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Chapter 28

Serving God

I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

A. Be Prepared to Serve God

B. Be Devoted to God's Work

C. Reasons to Serve God

D. Being Guided by God

II. Doing God's Work

A. Do God's Work – the Best You Can

B. Do the Work through God

C. The Manner in Which to Serve God

D. Working with Other Believers

E. Spiritual Gifts

Part I

Preliminary Instructions and Insights

All of God's people are his servants – and so need to be prepared to serve him. This requires devotion to God, and to his work. As well as instructing us to serve God, the Bible provides plenty of encouragement to persevere in doing so. The Bible also gives insights into being guided by God, something which is very much applicable to serving God as well as to other areas of our lives.

Section A

Be Prepared to Serve God

Be prepared and ready to do God's work

So *prepare your minds for service* and have self-control. 1 Peter 1:13a NCV™

[God:] But you, Jeremiah, *get yourself ready!* Go and tell these people everything I instruct you to say. Jeremiah 1:17a NET

Being prepared for God's work requires godly living

[Paul, speaking of church leaders:] For *the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain.* **8***Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self–controlled.* Titus 1:7-8 NET

Section B

Be Devoted to God's Work

Serve only God

[Samuel, to the people of Israel:] *Give your hearts to the LORD and serve only him.* Then he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." **4**So the Israelites removed the Baals and images of Ashtoreth. *They served only the LORD.*
1 Samuel 7:3b-4 NET

Devote yourself to God's work

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your work in the Lord is never wasted. 1 Corinthians 15:58b NCV™

Dedicate your life to living for God and Jesus Christ

[Paul, to believers:] So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: *offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.* Romans 12:1 GNT

Then he [Jesus] said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, *he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.* Luke 9:23 NET

> We must deny ourselves – give up living for ourselves and what we want – and live for Christ instead, daily shouldering the accompanying difficulties.

Section C
Reasons to Serve God

God is our God, who has done great things for us

[Moses, to the Israelites:] Revere *the LORD your God, serve him*, be loyal to him and take oaths only in his name. **21**He is the one you should praise; *he is your God, the one who has done these great and awesome things for you that you have seen*. Deuteronomy 10:20-21 NET

Your work for God will be productive

[Jesus, explaining a parable:] But the ones on the good soil are the people who hear the word but also hold on to it with good and honest hearts, *producing a crop through endurance*. Luke 8:15 ISV

> As with "fruit" elsewhere in this chapter, "crop" may well be referring to – or at least may be applied to – the productivity of one's work for the kingdom (the theme of this subsection). Alternatively the spiritual growth of the individual believer may be in view.

You will be rewarded for your work

But as for you, be strong and don't get discouraged, for *your work will be rewarded*. 2 Chronicles 15:7 NET

Whoever does not produce "fruit" will be cut off from Christ

[Jesus, speaking of God:] *He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit*. John 15:2a NCV™

Section D
Being Guided by God

The topic of being guided by God is very pertinent to serving God – such

as in ascertaining his will in regard to how we should serve him. It is also of course important in other aspects of our lives. For it is vital in living righteously generally and in navigating through troubled times, as reflected in some of the following verses. God's guidance also becomes an issue when we need to make a significant choice or decision.

God's guidance may come through such sources as: the Holy Spirit's promptings; inner conviction or assurance (itself largely of the Holy Spirit); Scripture; circumstances; or advice from others. But God does not always guide his people by making them aware of his will. They may not even be aware of being guided by God, only recognizing his guidance in retrospect. The Bible actually says little about how one should find out God's guidance. But it does speak of how living a godly life and prayer are critical for being open to it – as is indicated in the following subsections.

To be guided by God, live a godly life

[Directives to Israel:] *You must remove the burdensome yoke from among you and stop pointing fingers and speaking sinfully.* **10***You must actively help the hungry and feed the oppressed. Then* your light will dispel the darkness, and your darkness will be transformed into noonday. **11***The LORD will continually lead you*; he will feed you even in parched regions. Isaiah 58:9b-11a NET

Ask God to guide you (as in troubled times)

[David, to God:] For you are my rock and my fortress; *for the sake of your name guide me and lead me*. Psalms 31:3 ISV

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Part II

Doing God's Work

In instructing us in how to do God's work, serving him, the Bible urges us to do our best but emphasizes God's role and the need to rely on him. The Bible also teaches us about: the manner in which we should serve God; serving God in a church context; and God's extraordinary spiritual gifts to his people for serving him.

Section A

Do God's Work – the Best You Can

Do the work assigned to you

[Paul, to believers:] God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus *he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do*. Ephesians 2:10 GNT

> Paul appears to be speaking of God preparing particular work for each believer to do (cf. AMP). As such, believers need to look to God to guide them and enable them to do the work – and willingly do it.

Work hard at God's work

[Paul, to the Roman believers:] Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have *worked hard for the Lord*. Greet dear Persis, who has *worked very hard for the Lord*. Romans 16:12 GW

Do quality work which bears "fruit" – "fruit" that will last

[Jesus, to his disciples:] You did not choose me. *I chose you and sent you out to produce fruit, the kind of fruit that will last.* John 15:16a CEV

Here “fruit” likely refers to spiritual outcomes of quality work for God.

Section B
Do the Work through God

Apart from God and Jesus Christ, we can accomplish nothing

[Jesus, to his disciples:] Remain in me, and I will remain in you. *Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.* **5** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing.* John 15:4-5 NET

[Paul:] I planted the seeds, Apollos watered them, *but God made them sprout and grow.* **7***What matters isn’t those who planted or watered, but God who made the plants grow.* 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 CEV

God’s servants cannot themselves produce any true and lasting spiritual results or growth from the work that they do – only God can.

Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray

[The early believers, praying:] Lord, listen to their threats! *We are your servants. So make us brave enough to speak your message.* **30***Show your mighty power, as we heal people and work miracles and wonders in the name of your holy Servant Jesus.* **31***After they had prayed, the meeting place shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and bravely spoke God’s message.* Acts 4:29-31 CEV

[Paul, to the Ephesian believers:] *Pray for me also, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak – that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel,* **20**for which I am an ambassador in chains. *Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.* Ephesians 6:19-20 NET

Do God's work with his help

[Peter, to believers:] *Whoever speaks, let it be with God's words. Whoever serves, do so with the strength that God supplies,* so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 4:11a NET

The first statement is probably indicating that we should rely on God's help in what we say in ministering to others – as is paralleled in the second statement regarding serving with God's strength.

Serve God through the Holy Spirit

[Paul, to believers:] But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that *we serve in the new way of the Spirit* and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:6 ESV

God's people serve and obey him now by following the directing of the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit's empowerment, rather than by focusing on "obeying the letter of the law" (NLT).

Section C

The Manner in Which to Serve God

Serve God in holiness and righteousness

[Zechariah, the priest:] This oath [of God] grants **74**that we, being rescued from

the hand of our enemies, may *serve him without fear,* [75]*in holiness and righteousness* before him for as long as we live. Luke 1:73b-75 NET

Serve God wholeheartedly

[Moses:] And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to *serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,* … Deuteronomy 10:12 ESV

Be strong and courageous

The LORD gave this command to Joshua, son of Nun: *"Be strong and courageous, because you will bring the Israelites into the land that I swore to give them, and I will be with you."* Deuteronomy 31:23 GW

Section D
Working with Other Believers

Serve each other

[Paul, to believers:] *Serve each other with love.* Galatians 5:13 NCV™

Do God's work together

[Paul, to Syzygus:] And, my true partner, *I ask you to help them. These women have worked together with me and with Clement and with the others in spreading the good news.* Philippians 4:3a CEV

Encourage each other in doing God's work

We must also consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things. Hebrews 10:24 GW

He [King Josiah] appointed the priests to fulfill their duties and *encouraged them to carry out their service in the LORD's temple*. 2 Chronicles 35:2 NET

Section E
Spiritual Gifts

God equips people to serve him, notably by giving them spiritual gifts.

God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Spirit

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all. **8**For *one person is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, and another the message of knowledge according to the same Spirit,* **9***to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,* **10***to another performance of miracles, to another prophecy, and to another discernment of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues*. 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 NET

Broadly speaking, "the message of wisdom" and "the message of knowledge" (v. 8) quite possibly are respectively "the ability to give wise advice" (NLT) or insight and "the gift of special knowledge" (NLT) – with probably the application and conveying of spiritual truths being particularly in view.

The term "faith" (v. 9) does not refer to saving faith, but to exceptional faith or trust in God. The gift of "prophecy" (v. 10) is the communication of a revelation from God, such as a foretelling of a future event or a

revelation of God's will regarding a certain matter.

The gift of "discernment of spirits" (v. 10) appears to be the ability to distinguish whether something, such as a prophecy or teaching, is prompted by the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit. The gift of "tongues" (v. 10) is the ability to speak in an unlearned language. (Note that further gifts are mentioned in the following subsection.)

Use your spiritual gift to build up the church

It was he [Christ] who *gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,* **12***to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ,* **13***until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God – a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature.* Ephesians 4:11-13 NET

As parts of the body of Christ, believers are to use the gifts they have been given (v. 11) in ministry (v. 12a) so that Christ's body may be built up and become mature (vv. 12b-13).

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 29

Significant Practices

I. Symbolic Rites

A. Baptism

B. The Lord’s Supper

C. Circumcision: Its Needlessness

II. Other Significant Practices

A. Confession of Jesus Christ

B. Keeping the Sabbath Holy

C. Fasting

D. The Laying on of Hands

Part I

Symbolic Rites

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are considered by many churches to be the Christian rites or sacraments. "Sacrament" comes from a Latin term meaning "military oath". The sacraments are often spoken of as being an outward sign with an inner significance. They are practiced by churches in worship ceremonies. Circumcision was also a rite practiced by God's people, under the first covenant, but has no such relevance under the second covenant.

Section A

Baptism

The Greek translated as "baptism" denotes washing in water. Opinions differ as to whether baptism need necessarily involve full immersion in water, as opposed to simply pouring or sprinkling water on the person being baptized.

God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ

On hearing this, *they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Acts 19:5 ESV

> Being baptized in or into the "name" of Jesus Christ, is in part a declaration of our identification and relationship with Jesus Christ, and our commitment or allegiance to him. This explanation reflects both the meaning of the Latin from which "sacrament" comes – military oath (as commented above) – and the concept of being united with Christ

(discussed in the following subsection).

Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications

[Paul, to believers:] How can we who died as far as sin is concerned go on living in it? **3**Or don't you know that *all of us who were baptized into union with the Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death? **4**Therefore, through baptism we were buried with him into his death so that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too may live an entirely new life. **5**For if we have become united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.* Romans 6:2b-5 ISV

After indicating that baptism signifies the spiritual union of the believer with Christ (v. 3), Paul draws parallels between baptism and other aspects of this spiritual union. Paul appears to parallel one's immersion in water at baptism, with being immersed in death with Christ in his death (vv. 3-4a, 5a). As such, baptism portrays the death of our old self which was enslaved to sin (cf. vv. 6-7), and so a death to sin (v. 2b). Subsequently baptism symbolizes one being raised up in union with Christ to live a new spiritual life (vv. 4b, 5b).

Baptism signifies belief

But *when they believed Philip as he was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they began to be baptized*, both men and women. Acts 8:12 NET

Baptism is a declaration and confirmation of belief.

Baptism signifies the washing away of sins

[Ananias, to Saul:] And now what are you waiting for? Get up, *be baptized, and*

have your sins washed away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16 NET

> This should not be interpreted to mean that baptism in itself brings the forgiveness of sin. Rather, the external washing in water is symbolic of one's spiritual cleansing.

Section B

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is regularly practiced in churches. It primarily symbolizes and commemorates Jesus Christ's death for us. The breaking of the bread symbolizes the breaking of his body, and the pouring out of the wine symbolizes the pouring out of his blood.

Observe the Lord's Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death

[Paul, to the Corinthian believers:] For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that *the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread,* **24***and after he had given thanks he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* **25***In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me."* 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NET

> "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (v. 25), speaks of Jesus Christ's blood, shed in his death, introducing the new relationship – or covenant – between God and his people. In part at least this was achieved by his death bringing forgiveness for the sins of God's people. The shedding of his blood inaugurated the new covenant and ratified or

sealed it (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NLT) – just as the sprinkling of “the blood of the covenant” by Moses ceremonially confirmed the old covenant (cf. Exodus 24:5-8).

Participating in the Lord’s Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ

[Paul, to the Corinthian believers:] *The cup of blessing that we bless is a sign of our sharing in the blood of the Messiah, isn’t it? The bread that we break is a sign of our sharing in the body of the Messiah, isn’t it?* **17***Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, because all of us partake of the one loaf.*
1 Corinthians 10:16-17 ISV

The two rhetorical questions in v. 16 appear to imply that drinking from the cup and eating of the bread – in addition to remembering Jesus Christ and his death – symbolize one’s participation in what Christ’s death accomplished, i.e. forgiveness and thus salvation. However, in view of v. 17, the second rhetorical question may well additionally or alternatively mean that eating from the one loaf of bread symbolizes one being part of and participating in Christ’s body, the church.

Section C
Circumcision: Its Needlessness

Circumcision of males is the cutting off of the foreskin. Jewish males undergo circumcision in keeping with both God’s covenant with Abraham (their ancestor), and God’s covenant and law for Israel, i.e. the Mosaic Law.

In regard to God’s covenant and law for Israel, being circumcised

signifies one's adherence to the law – on which the covenant was based – as the way to righteousness. This is in contrast to and at odds with the way of faith in Jesus Christ, which God introduced in conjunction with the new covenant.

Circumcision does not bring salvation

Now some men came down from Judea [to the church at Antioch] and *began to teach the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."* **2**When *Paul and Barnabas had a major argument and debate with them,* the church appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them to go up to meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this point of disagreement. … [Peter:] **11***On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,* in the same way as they are." Acts 15:1-2, 11 NET

> In v. 11 the apostle Peter sides emphatically with Paul and Barnabas (v. 2), indicating that circumcision and adherence to the OT law (which circumcision symbolizes) do not bring salvation.

Circumcision is of no consequence for believers

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

It is our hearts that should be circumcised

Therefore, *circumcise your heart and stop being stubborn*. Deuteronomy 10:16 ISV

> Circumcision of the heart involves changing to become responsive to God. It involves "cutting off" the rigidity of sin from a person's heart.

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Part II

Other Significant Practices

It is important for Christians to understand all significant church practices. Confessing Jesus Christ is one such practice that we need to understand – and be prepared to do. The Sabbath is largely ignored by some Christians, who see it as not relevant in the new covenant – but a number of theologians would disagree. Reasons for and against are included here. Fasting is a practice that is a very valuable supplement to such things as prayer and worship. The laying on of hands is a further common practice, and so we should also be familiar with its significance and use in the Bible.

Section A

Confession of Jesus Christ

Confessing Jesus Christ is an expression of allegiance to him, as Lord, and involves stating what one believes about him. It is often done formally at one's baptism and corporately in church with the recital of creeds or "confessions". In addition, many Christians will experience times in which they should acknowledge Jesus Christ and their faith in him before unbelievers – often at the cost or risk of being persecuted.

Confess Jesus Christ, before others

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take note of *Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess, …* Hebrews 3:1 NET

[Jesus:] I tell you, whoever *acknowledges me before men*, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before God's angels. Luke 12:8 NET

Things to confess about Jesus Christ

The Jews had already agreed to put anyone who *acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ* out of the synagogue. John 9:22b GW

And everyone will *confess that Jesus Christ is Lord* and bring glory to God the Father. Philippians 2:11 NCV™

If anyone *confesses that Jesus is the Son of God*, God resides in him and he in God. 1 John 4:15 NET

Section B
Keeping the Sabbath Holy

Observe the Sabbath as holy by resting on it

[God, to the Israelites:] *"Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.* **9***You have six days in which to do your work,* **10***but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country.* **11***In six days I, the LORD, made the earth, the sky, the sea, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the LORD, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy*. Exodus 20:8-11 GNT

> Israel was to observe the Sabbath as a sign of being God's people, identifying themselves with him by resting on the seventh day has he did. The necessity for Christians to observe the Sabbath has been the subject of debate.

Observing the Sabbath enables people to be refreshed

For *six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you must cease, in order that your ox and your donkey may rest and that your female servant's son and any hired help may refresh themselves*. Exodus 23:12 NET

It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath

A man was there who had a withered hand. And they asked Jesus, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"* so that they could accuse him. **11***He said to them, "Would not any one of you, if he had one sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, take hold of it and lift it out?* **12***How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."* **13***Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was restored, as healthy as the other.* Matthew 12:10-13 NET

Verses that might suggest we do not need to keep the Sabbath

[Paul, to believers:] Therefore *do not let anyone judge you with respect to* food or drink, or in the matter of a feast, new moon, or *Sabbath days –* **17***these are only the shadow of the things to come*, but the reality is Christ! Colossians 2:16-17 NET

Section C
Fasting

Fasting can be done regularly, with worship and prayer

She [Anna] had lived as a widow since then for eighty–four years. She never left the temple, *worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day*. Luke 2:37 NET

Fasting implies and promotes earnestness in worship and prayer. When fasting, the ache and craving of hunger brings an earnestness and intensity to our worship and prayers. Fasting also promotes clarity of thought. Furthermore, our hunger serves as a reminder to worship and/or pray throughout the fasting period.

Fasting can be done on particular occasions, in petitioning God

[Ezra:] So *we fasted and asked our God for a safe journey, and he answered our prayer*. Ezra 8:23 GW

Section D
The Laying on of Hands

In conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit

Then Peter and John placed their hands on the Samaritans, and they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:17 NET

Note that the laying on of hands to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit is generally done in conjunction with the recipients coming to faith – rather than at a time chosen by those performing the act. Also, it is not essential for a person to have hands laid on them for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

In conveying blessing

After he [Jesus] took the children in his arms, *he placed his hands on them and blessed them*. Mark 10:16 NET

In commissioning for ministry

While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, *"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* **3***Then, after they had fasted and prayed and placed their hands on them, they sent them off*. Acts 13:2-3 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 30

Church Leadership

I. General

A. Required Characteristics

B. Managing the Church

C. Caring for Church Members

D. Church Members' Duties to Leaders

II. Teaching in the Church

A. What to Teach: God's Word

B. How to Teach

C. False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

D. False Teachers (II): Guarding against Them

Part I

General

Good leadership is one of the most important prerequisites for a healthy church. For a church to function effectively it is critical that leaders know and do what is required of them. It is also important for church members to know what they should expect of leaders – and how they can support their leaders.

Note that a number of verses in this chapter speak of Paul and other NT leaders in their work overseeing a number of churches, or of leaders of the nation of Israel. Such verses are generally readily applicable to leaders of local churches today, and to their relationship with church members.

Section A

Required Characteristics

Godliness

For *the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain.* **8***Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self–controlled.* Titus 1:7-8 NET

Wisdom

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *Select wise and practical men, those known among your tribes, whom I may appoint as your leaders.* Deuteronomy 1:13 NET

Strength and courage

[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. Joshua 1:6 ISV

Deep love for church members

[Paul, to church members:] *Because of our love for you we were ready to share with you not only the Good News from God but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!* 1 Thessalonians 2:8 GNT

Section B
Managing the Church

As a leader, provide good leadership

Elders who *provide effective leadership* must be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17 NET

Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority

[Paul, to church members:] Instead, *we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children.* 1 Thessalonians 2:7b ISV

[Paul, to church members:] For this reason, *although in the Messiah I have complete freedom to order you to do what is proper,* **9** *I prefer to make my appeal on the basis of love.* Philemon 1:8-9a ISV

Be an example for others to follow

[Paul, to church members:] For you know yourselves how *you must imitate us, because we did not behave without discipline among you,* **8***and we did not eat anyone's food without paying. Instead, in toil and drudgery we worked night and day in order not to burden any of you.* **9**It was not because we do not have that right, but *to give ourselves as an example for you to imitate.* 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 NET

Section C
Caring for Church Members

See also:

- Caring for the Body

Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock

[Paul, to leaders:] *Pay attention to yourselves and to the entire flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to be shepherds of God's church,* which he acquired with his own blood. Acts 20:28 GW

Pray for church members

[Paul, to church members:] *We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.* Colossians 1:9 CEV

Strengthen members in the faith

[Paul, to church members:] We are speaking in Christ before God, and *everything we do, dear friends, is to build you up.* 2 Corinthians 12:19b NET

Work hard at helping church members

[Paul, speaking to Colossian church members about Epaphras:] For I can testify that *he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis*. Colossians 4:13 NET

Confront church members over sin

[God, to Ezekiel:] Son of man, *confront Jerusalem with her abominable practices* … Ezekiel 16:2 NET

Section D
Church Members' Duties to Leaders

Love your leaders

[Paul, to the Corinthian believers:] You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge, in your eagerness to help and in *your love for us*. 2 Corinthians 8:7a GNT

Obey your leaders

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 ESV

Give your leaders material support

Now *the one who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the one who teaches it*. Galatians 6:6 NET

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Part II

Teaching in the Church

Teaching is one of the main roles of most church leaders. Good teaching is based on God's word, and should be delivered in accordance with the directions and sound examples found in Scripture. On the topic of teaching, one must also be aware of the characteristics of "false" teachers who are so often present in the church, so as to recognize them and deal with them.

Section A

What to Teach: God's Word

Teach and preach God's word

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17**that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NET

[Paul, to Timothy:] *Preach the word!* 2 Timothy 4:2a NKJV

Teach God's commands and ways

[Jethro, to Moses:] *You should teach them God's commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do.* Exodus 18:20 GNT

Teach the truths of the faith

[Paul, to Timothy:] *By pointing out such things to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, having nourished yourself on the words of*

the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. 1 Timothy 4:6 NET

In v. 6a Paul exhorts Timothy to instruct the believers in the things that he had been writing about. These things were composed of or in line with the "words" or truths of the faith (v. 6b).

Read God's word in church worship

[Paul, to Timothy:] Until I get there, *concentrate on reading Scripture in worship,* giving encouraging messages, and teaching people. 1 Timothy 4:13 GW

Section B
How to Teach

Explain God's word and truths

They [Levites] *read from the book of God's law, explaining it and imparting insight.* Thus the people gained understanding from what was read. Nehemiah 8:8 NET

From morning until evening *he* [Paul] *continued to explain the kingdom of God to them,* trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the Prophets. Acts 28:23b ISV

The manner in which to teach

[Paul, to the church leader Titus:] *Be sincere and serious in your teaching.* **8***Use sound words that cannot be criticized,* so that your enemies may be put to shame by not having anything bad to say about us. Titus 2:7b-8 GNT

[Paul, to Timothy:] *Be very patient when you teach.* 2 Timothy 4:2b GW

Section C

False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, while claiming God's authority

[Jeremiah:] Then the LORD said to me, *"Those* [false] *prophets are prophesying lies while claiming my authority!* I did not send them. I did not commission them. I did not speak to them. *They are prophesying to these people false visions, worthless predictions, and the delusions of their own mind.* Jeremiah 14:14 NET

They say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things

[Jeremiah, warning his people about false prophets:] *They are filling you with false hopes.* They are reporting visions of their own imaginations, not something the LORD has given them to say. **17***They continually say to those who reject what the LORD has said, 'Things will go well for you!' They say to all those who follow the stubborn inclinations of their own hearts, 'Nothing bad will happen to you!'* Jeremiah 23:16b-17 NET

False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ

Who, then, is the liar? It is those who say that Jesus is not the Messiah. Such people are the Enemies of Christ—they reject both the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22 GNT

False teachers (in view here) typically deny or dilute key aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Section D

False Teachers (II): Guarding against Them

Watch out for false teachers and their teaching – so as not to be deceived

Watch out for false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are voracious wolves. Matthew 7:15 NET

Let nobody deceive you with empty words, for because of these things God's wrath comes on the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6 NET

Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures

The people of Berea were more open-minded than the people of Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive God's message, and *every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true*. Acts 17:11 GW

False teachers can be recognized by their "fruit"

You will recognize them by their fruit. Grapes are not gathered from thorns or figs from thistles, are they? **17**In the same way, *every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit*. **18**A good tree is not able to bear bad fruit, nor a bad tree to bear good fruit. Matthew 7:16-18 NET

> As used here, "fruit" is that which one's inner being or character produces – basically one's words and actions. In a secondary sense, the effect of one's words and actions – particularly on other people – is also one's produce or "fruit".

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Unit 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

Chapter 31

Love

I. Loving Qualities

A. Love: Insights

B. Love: Commands

C. Mercy

D. Gentleness

II. Antitheses of Love

A. Selfish Attitudes

B. Ill Feelings

C. Adverse Speech

D. Adverse Force

Part I

Loving Qualities

The importance of love could hardly be more emphatically stated by the Bible. Love should encompass every area of our lives and be the basis of all that we do in relating to people. Other personal qualities reflective of love are also regularly applicable in our relationships with other people (and are also discussed in this section).

Note that the teaching in this and the subsequent chapters in *Part G. Relating to People* is also relevant to the preceding part of this book, *Part F. Church Life*.

Section A

Love: Insights

See also:

- Love Each Other

What love is

Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. **5***It is not rude, it is not self–serving, it is not easily angered or resentful.* **6***It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth.* **7***It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NET

In v. 7, “believes all things, hopes all things” means that love: “…is ever ready to believe the best of every person” and that “its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances…” (AMP).

The supremacy of love

[An expert in the law, to Jesus:] *"Which commandment is the most important of all?"* **29***Jesus answered, "The most important is:* 'Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30***Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* **31***The second is: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
Mark 12:28b-31 NET

[Paul, speaking of the way of love:] And now I will show you *a way that is beyond comparison.* **13:1** *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* **2***And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.* **3***If I give away everything I own, and if I give over my body in order to boast, but do not have love, I receive no benefit. …* **13***And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.* 1 Corinthians 12:31b; 13:1-3, 13 NET

Section B
Love: Commands

Live a life of love . . .

As you have heard from the beginning, *his* [God's] *command is this: Live a life of love.* 2 John 1:6b NCV™

Live in love as Christ also loved us. He gave his life for us as an offering and sacrifice, a soothing aroma to God. Ephesians 5:2 GW

. . . Do all things in love

Everything you do should be done in love. 1 Corinthians 16:14 NET

Love others as you love yourself . . .

Do not take revenge on anyone or continue to hate him, but *love your neighbor as you love yourself*. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:18 GNT

. . . "Love your neighbor as yourself" sums up God's law

Owe no one anything, except to *love one another, for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* **9***For the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet," (and if there is any other commandment) are summed up in this, "Love your neighbor as yourself."* **10***Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* Romans 13:8-10 NET

> The whole moral law – all that involves our relationships with other people – is summed up by the command to love others as we love ourselves. In doing so, we fulfill or carry out the law.

Love your enemies and do good to them

[Jesus:] But *I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,* **28***bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. …* **31***Treat others in the same way that you would want them to treat you.* Luke 6:27-28, 31 NET

Section C
Mercy

Mercy involves such things as: not penalizing those subject to one's judgment and retribution (due to things like wrongful action or debt); and doing more than one is bound to do in helping others. It is showing kindness beyond what is required of one or is otherwise considered fitting.

Show mercy

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:36 NET

You must see that justice is done, and must *show kindness and mercy to one another*. Zechariah 7:9b GNT

Be merciful and God will show you mercy

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7 NET

The final clause refers to being shown mercy by God.

Forgive others and God will forgive you

If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you. **15***But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.* Matthew 6:14-15 CEV

Do not judge others, or God will judge you accordingly

Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, **2***for God will judge you in the same way as you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others.* Matthew 7:1-2 GNT

We will all face God's judgment but the above passage speaks of the same condemnatory standard of judgment being applied by God to those who exercise it themselves.

Be generous and share with others

[Paul, instructing Timothy what to teach believers:] Tell them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to *be generous givers, sharing with others*. 1 Timothy 6:18 NET

All day long he [a lazy person] continues to crave, while *the righteous one gives without holding back*. Proverbs 21:26 ISV

Section D
Gentleness

Be humble, gentle and patient

[Paul, to believers:] I, therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *live worthily of the calling with which you have been called, [2]with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, …* Ephesians 4:1-2 NET

Be meek

[Jesus:] *You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39]But I say to you, do not resist the evildoer. But whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well. [40]And if someone wants to sue you and to take your tunic, give him your coat also. [41]And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. [42]Give to the one who asks you, and do not reject the one who wants to borrow from you.* Matthew 5:38-42 NET

The concept of "meekness" involves an approach of non-retaliation and even non-resistance in the face of offences. It is characterized by humility and gentleness.

The command to “not resist the evildoer” (v. 39a) is given in respect to one’s own rights; it is not saying that we should not stand against an evil person on behalf of others. The illustrations that follow (vv. 39b-42) show that one should not retaliate and not insist on one’s rights. Some commentators view these as hyperbole, while others consider such a view to be watering down the extent of what is being taught.

Seek peace, including peace with others

Turn away from evil and do good; *seek peace and pursue it*. Psalms 34:14 ESV

Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. Romans 12:18 GNT

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Part II

Antitheses of Love

We have various tendencies that work counter to love. These largely involve selfish attitudes and ill feelings – along with the adverse speech and actions that they produce. These greatly inhibit and harm our relationships with others, and must be avoided.

Section A
Selfish Attitudes

Do not pursue selfish ends

Don't act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Philippians 2:3a GW

… but *for those who are self-seeking* and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, *there will be wrath and fury*. Romans 2:8 ESV

Do not be greedy

How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You clean the outside of cups and dishes. But *inside they are full of greed* and uncontrolled desires. Matthew 23:25 GW

Do not covet

'And *you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.*' Deuteronomy 5:21 ESV

We are not to crave or desire anything that belongs to another.

Seek the interests of others before your own . . .

[Paul, to believers:] *None of you should be looking to your own interests, but to the interests of others. …* **33***Just do as I do; I try to please everyone in all that I do, not thinking of my own good, but of the good of all, so that they might be saved.* 1 Corinthians 10:24, 33 GNT

. . . Do so even at great cost to yourself, as Jesus Christ did

[Paul, to believers:] For you know the grace of *our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, he became poor for your sakes, so that you by his poverty could become rich.* 2 Corinthians 8:9 NET

Section B
Ill Feelings

Control and avoid anger

When you are angry, do not sin, and be sure to stop being angry before the end of the day. **27***Do not give the devil a way to defeat you. …* **31***Do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily* or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Ephesians 4:26-27, 31 NCV™

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! *Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.* **20***For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.* James 1:19-20 NET

Do not hate

You must not hate your fellow citizen in your heart. Leviticus 19:17a NCV™

If anyone says "I love God" and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20 NET

Get rid of any bitterness or malice

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Ephesians 4:31 ESV

Do not be jealous

Wild parties, drunkenness, sexual immorality, promiscuity, rivalry, and *jealousy cannot be part of our lives*. Romans 13:13 GW

Section C
Adverse Speech

Do not quarrel

Starting a quarrel is like a leak in a dam, so stop it before a fight breaks out. …
19*Whoever loves to argue loves to sin.* Proverbs 17:14, 19a NCV™

Do not slander

So get rid of all evil and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and *all slander*.
1 Peter 2:1 NET

Do not gossip

A perverse person spreads dissension, and *a gossip separates the closest friends*. Proverbs 16:28 NET

Do not grumble against others

[James, to believers:] *Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged.* See, the judge stands before the gates! James 5:9 NET

> Grumbling or complaining against others is an outward expression of inner condemnatory judgment of them – which leaves oneself open to such judgment.

Section D
Adverse Force

Do not use violence

[The king of Nineveh:] Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly to God, and *everyone must turn from their evil way of living and from the violence that they do*. Jonah 3:8 NET

Do not murder

You shall not murder. Exodus 20:13 NET

Do not rape

[Moses, to the Israelites:] But *if the man came across the engaged woman in the field and overpowered her and raped her, then only the rapist must die*.

Deuteronomy 22:25 NET

The NT does not propagate the death penalty. Nevertheless its mention in regard to such actions shows the seriousness of the crime.

Do not oppress

Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! *Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people*, declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 45:9 ESV

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Chapter 32

Justice

I. Justice in Action

A. Do What Is Just and Right

B. Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

C. Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

II. Being True

A. Faithfulness

B. Truthfulness

C. Deceitfulness

D. Dishonest Gain

Part I

Justice in Action

Topics encompassed by the theme of justice together form a very large proportion of what the Bible says about how to relate to other people. It is essential that we incorporate the Bible's teaching on these topics into our own lives. In doing so, we must be mindful that acting justly involves not only doing what is right ourselves; it also involves ensuring that others are treated fairly – notably the needy.

Section A

Do What Is Just and Right

Act justly

No, the LORD has told us what is good. *What he requires of us is this: to do what is just,* to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God. Micah 6:8 GNT

[Moses, to the Israelites:] *You must pursue justice alone* so that you may live and inherit the land the LORD your God is giving you. Deuteronomy 16:20 NET

In acting justly, do what is right

[God:] *Learn to do what is right! Promote justice!* Isaiah 1:17a NET

To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. Proverbs 21:3 ISV

Maintain justice

This is what the LORD says: *Preserve justice,* and do what is right. My salvation is about to come. My righteousness is about to be revealed. Isaiah 56:1 GW

Do not show favoritism

You must not deal unjustly in judgment: you must neither show partiality to the poor nor honor the rich. Leviticus 19:15a NET

[Paul, to Timothy:] Before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, I solemnly charge you to *carry out these commands without prejudice or favoritism of any kind*. 1 Timothy 5:21 NET

Section B
Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

Do not mistreat the needy

Don't oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and poor people. Zechariah 7:10a GW

Defend the cause of the needy

Defend the weak and the orphans; defend the rights of the poor and suffering.
4*Save the weak and helpless; free them from the power of the wicked.* Psalms 82:3-4 NCV™

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing. **9***Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy."* Proverbs 31:8-9 NCV™

Provide the needy with food and clothing

John answered them, *"The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise."* Luke 3:11 NET

A disciple named Tabitha lived in the city of Joppa. Her Greek name was Dorcas. *She always helped people and gave things to the poor. …* [39]So Peter went with them. When he arrived, he was taken upstairs. *All the widows stood around him. They were crying and showing Peter the articles of clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.* Acts 9:36, 39 GW

Even sell your possessions so as to give to the poor

[Jesus:] *Sell your possessions and give to the poor.* Luke 12:33a NET

They [believers] *made it their practice to sell their possessions and goods and to distribute the proceeds to anyone who was in need.* Acts 2:45 ISV

Treat foreigners the same as your native-born

The foreigner who resides with you must be to you like a native citizen among you; so you must love him as yourself, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. Leviticus 19:34a NET

Note that foreigners were seen as being vulnerable and needy.

Section C
Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

Defending and providing for the needy are part of true religion

[God, referring to King Josiah:] *He always did right— he gave justice to the*

poor and was honest. **16***That's what it means to truly know me.* Jeremiah 22:15b-16a CEV

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27 NET

Providing for the needy brings oneself blessing

The one who is gracious to the poor lends to the LORD, and the LORD will repay him for his good deed. Proverbs 19:17 NET

[Jesus:] *Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure you receive.* Luke 6:38 NET

> Quite possibly Jesus has giving to the poor primarily in view. This teaching is at least inclusive of it.

God will punish those who ignore the needy

"Then he [Jesus Christ] will say to those on his left, *'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!* **42***For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.* **43***I was a stranger and you did not receive me as a guest, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'* **44**Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not give you whatever you needed?' **45**Then he will answer them, *'I tell you the truth, just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.'* **46***And these will depart into eternal punishment*, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:41-46 NET

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Part II

Being True

In order to do what is right in our relationships with others, we must be true – both faithful and truthful. It is important to remember that faithfulness and truth – with the trust that they generate – are absolutely essential for our relationships with others to work, for so many aspects of our relationships are dependent on them. Accordingly we must avoid deceitfulness and associated dishonest practices. Bear in mind that deceitfulness is arguably the prime characteristic of Satan and evil.

Section A
Faithfulness

Be faithful

Never let go of loyalty and faithfulness. Tie them round your neck; write them on your heart. **4***If you do this, both God and people will be pleased with you.*
Proverbs 3:3-4 GNT

Be trustworthy

In the same way, women must be respected by others. They must not speak evil of others. They must be self-controlled and *trustworthy in everything*.
1 Timothy 3:11 NCV™

Stand by others

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *You are the ones who have always stood by me in my*

trials. Luke 22:28 ISV

So Naomi said, “Look, your sister–in–law is returning to her people and to her god. Follow your sister–in–law back home!” **16***But Ruth replied, “Stop urging me to abandon you! For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your people will become my people, and your God will become my God.* **17***Wherever you die, I will die – and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I do not keep my promise! Only death will be able to separate me from you!”* Ruth 1:15-17 NET

> Ruth’s promise to stand by her bereaved mother-in-law is a superlative expression of loyalty and commitment.

Section B
Truthfulness

Speak the truth

These are the things you must do: Speak the truth, each of you, to one another. Zechariah 8:16a NET

Be honest

If you are a thief, quit stealing. *Be honest* and work hard, so you will have something to give to people in need. Ephesians 4:28 CEV

Be sincere

[Paul, to the Corinthian believers:] Our conscience testifies that *we have conducted ourselves in the world with pure motives and godly sincerity*, without earthly wisdom but with God’s grace—and especially towards you.

2 Corinthians 1:12b ISV

Have integrity

[God, to Solomon:] *You must serve me with integrity and sincerity, just as your father David did.* Do everything I commanded and obey my rules and regulations. 1 Kings 9:4 NET

Section C
Deceitfulness

Do not deceive

Never steal, lie, or deceive your neighbor. Leviticus 19:11b GW

Do not lie

[Paul, to the Colossian believers:] *Do not lie to one another* since you have put off the old man with its practices **10**and have been clothed with the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it. Colossians 3:9-10 NET

Do not give false testimony

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. Exodus 20:16 NET

Do not use flattery

[David:] People lie to one another; *they flatter and deceive.* **3***May the LORD cut off all flattering lips*, and the tongue that boasts! Psalms 12:2-3 NET

Do not plot evil schemes

Do not plan evil in your hearts against one another. Zechariah 8:17a NET

Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy. Proverbs 12:20 NET

Section D
Dishonest Gain

Note that because much of what can be described as “dishonest gain” involves deceitfulness, a good portion of this section is also relevant to the previous section, *Deceitfulness*.

Do not steal

You shall not steal. Exodus 20:15 NET

Do not defraud

You shall not cheat your neighbor … Leviticus 19:13a NKJV

Do not take excessive interest or extort money

[Ezekiel, speaking of a righteous person:] He keeps his hand from doing wrong. *He does not take too much interest or profit when he lends money.* He obeys my laws and lives by my rules. He will not die for his father’s sin; *he will surely live*. **18**But *his father took other people’s money unfairly* and robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people. *So he will die for his own sin.* Ezekiel 18:17-18 NCV™

Do not accept bribes

Be careful that no one entices you with riches; do not let a large bribe turn you aside. Job 36:18 NET

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Chapter 33

Wisdom

I. Being Wise

A. The Precedence of Godly Wisdom

B. Wisdom through God

C. Wisdom through Others

D. Wise Speech

E. Wise Personal Practices

II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

A. Foolishness

B. Foolish Practices

C. Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results

D. Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked

Part I

Being Wise

Wisdom is one of the attributes most highly valued in the Bible. Thankfully the Bible says much about how we can gain wisdom. The Bible also contains very astute advice on other topics associated with wisdom, notably speaking – a key medium that we use in relating to others.

Section A
The Precedence of Godly Wisdom

"Godly Wisdom" is used here to denote the wisdom which the Bible advocates, wisdom which is based on the Bible's teachings.

Godly wisdom is superior to anything else

Wisdom is supreme – so acquire wisdom, and whatever you acquire, acquire understanding! Proverbs 4:7 NET

[Wisdom:] *Grab hold of my instruction in lieu of money and knowledge instead of the finest gold,* **11***because wisdom is better than precious gems and nothing you desire can compare to it.* Proverbs 8:10-11 ISV

Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God

No one should fool himself. *If anyone among you thinks that he is wise by this world's standards, he should become a fool, in order to be really wise.* **19***For*

what this world considers to be wisdom is nonsense in God's sight. As the scripture says, "God traps the wise in their cleverness"; … 1 Corinthians 3:18-19 GNT

Here Paul portrays worldly wisdom as inferior to the wisdom of God – to both the wisdom of God himself (v. 19) and to godly wisdom (v. 18), which ultimately comes from God. In v. 18, "become a fool" means to forgo aspiring to the flawed wisdom of this world and recognize the shortcomings of one's understanding – in effect see oneself as a "fool" – so as to be open to true, godly wisdom.

Worldly wisdom is ultimately futile, even detrimental

"The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." 1 Corinthians 3:20b NET

Section B
Wisdom through God

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Proverbs 9:10 ESV

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom as it leads us to base our thinking and life on God and his teachings or commands – the source of true wisdom for life. For fear of God moves us to obey God's commands and do what is right, thus manifesting wisdom (as indicated in the following two subsections).

Ask God for wisdom . . .

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

. . . For it is God who gives wisdom

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. Daniel 2:21b ISV

Obeying God's commands brings wisdom

[Moses, to the Israelites:] Look! I have taught you statutes and ordinances just as the LORD my God told me to do, so that you might carry them out in the land you are about to enter and possess. **6**So *be sure to do them, because this will testify of your wise understanding to the people who will learn of all these statutes and say, "Indeed, this great nation is a very wise people."* Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NET

[A psalmist, to God:] *I have greater wisdom than those who are old, because I obey your commands.* Psalms 119:100 GNT

Wisdom involves doing what is right – and avoiding evil

[A wise father, to his son:] I will guide you *in the way of wisdom* and I will lead you *in upright paths.* Proverbs 4:11 NET

A wise person is cautious and turns from evil, but a fool throws off restraint and is overconfident. Proverbs 14:16 NET

Section C
Wisdom through Others

Pay attention to instruction

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to the words of knowledge. … **19***Listen, my child, and be wise,* and guide your heart on the right way. Proverbs 23:12, 19 NET

Heed discipline and correction

A fool rejects his father's discipline, but whoever heeds reproof shows good sense. … **32***The one who refuses correction despises himself, but whoever hears reproof acquires understanding.* Proverbs 15:5, 32 NET

> Here "reproof" appears to refer to a rebuke or reprimand, a form of discipline (v. 5) or correction (v. 32).

Section D
Wise Speech

Be quick to listen and slow to speak

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! *Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak,* slow to anger. James 1:19 NET

Use few words

When words abound, transgression is inevitable, but the one who restrains his words is wise. Proverbs 10:19 NET

Speak graciously

The words spoken by the wise are gracious … Ecclesiastes 10:12a ISV

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone. Colossians 4:6 NET

Remember that our words are determined by our "heart"

The mouth speaks the things that are in the heart. **35***Good people have good things in their hearts, and so they say good things. But evil people have evil in their hearts, so they say evil things.* Matthew 12:34b-35 NCV™

Section E
Wise Personal Practices

The following topics are prominent in what are known as the Bible's wisdom books, notably in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – as well as occurring elsewhere in the Bible.

Be self-controlled

Foolish people lose their tempers, but wise people control theirs. Proverbs 29:11 NCV™

Do not act in haste

It is dangerous to have zeal without knowledge, and *the one who acts hastily makes poor choices.* Proverbs 19:2 NET

Work hard

[Paul, to the Thessalonian believers:] *We didn't waste our time loafing,* **8**and we didn't accept food from anyone without paying for it. We didn't want to be a

burden to any of you, *so night and day we worked as hard as we could.*
2 Thessalonians 3:7b-8 CEV

She [a wife of noble character] *obtains wool and flax, and she is pleased to work with her hands.* **14***She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.* **15***She also gets up while it is still night, and provides food for her household and a portion to her female servants.* **16***She considers a field and buys it; from her own income she plants a vineyard.* **17***She begins her work vigorously, and she strengthens her arms.* **18***She knows that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out in the night.* **19***Her hands take hold of the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle.* Proverbs 31:13-19 NET

Enjoy life and be happy

[A wise teacher:] So *I recommend the enjoyment of life, for there is nothing better on earth for a person to do except to eat, drink, and enjoy life. So joy will accompany him in his toil during the days of his life which God gives him on earth.* Ecclesiastes 8:15 NET

[A wise teacher:] *I have concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live, …* Ecclesiastes 3:12 NET

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Part II

Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

Foolishness and spiritual ignorance are the antitheses of godly wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, foolishness and spiritual ignorance are very closely related to ungodliness; for ungodliness is the prime cause of them and further ungodliness results from them. Foolishness and spiritual ignorance with their consequences, stand in stark contrast to wisdom and her blessings.

Section A

Foolishness

Fools spurn and lack wisdom

Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but *fools despise wisdom and instruction*. Proverbs 1:7 NET

Wisdom is unattainable for a fool; in court he does not open his mouth. Proverbs 24:7 NET

Foolishness involves disobedience to God

Then Samuel said to Saul, *"You have acted foolishly. You haven't obeyed the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you.* 1 Samuel 13:13a ISV

Foolishness encompasses doing wrong

A foolish person enjoys doing wrong, but a person with understanding enjoys

doing what is wise. Proverbs 10:23 NCV™

Section B
Foolish Practices

Being quick-tempered is foolish

A person who has a quick temper does foolish things, and a person with crafty schemes is hated. Proverbs 14:17 NET

Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble

[A wise teacher:] *Listen, my child, and be wise*, and guide your heart on the right way. **20***Do not spend time among drunkards, among those who eat too much meat,* **21***because drunkards and gluttons become impoverished, and drowsiness clothes them with rags.* Proverbs 23:19-21 NET

Indulging in pleasure is foolish and pointless

[A wise teacher:] *I said of partying, "It is folly," and of self–indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"* Ecclesiastes 2:2 NET

Further notably foolish practices

He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.
Proverbs 6:32 ESV

The one who conceals hatred utters lies, and *the one who spreads slander is certainly a fool*. Proverbs 10:18 NET

Those who trust in themselves are foolish, but those who live wisely will be kept

safe. Proverbs 28:26 NCV™

Section C
Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results

Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin

[Jesus:] The light has come into the world, but *people loved the darkness more than the light because their actions were evil.* **20***Everyone who practices wickedness hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his actions may not be exposed.* John 3:19b-20 ISV

Due to people's evil deeds, they spurn the spiritual light that is Jesus Christ and his truth. For this light exposes their deeds for what they really are – evil. Spurning Christ's light means spiritual ignorance.

Spiritual ignorance is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded

They [godless people] are darkened in their understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of *the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts*. Ephesians 4:18 NET

This hardness of heart indicates that such people have "shut their minds" (NLT) – being stubborn (cf. CEV, GNT) and refusing to listen (cf. NCV).

Section D
Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked

The assertions contained in the subheadings in this section are typically true of ungodly people. Having said this, not all ungodly people and unbelievers are totally ignorant of all the things mentioned here.

The ungodly do not know God or Jesus Christ

Then they [the Pharisees] began asking him, "Who is your father?" *Jesus answered, "You do not know either me or my Father. If you knew me you would know my Father too."* John 8:19 NET

The ungodly do not comprehend God's word

[Jesus, to the Jewish religious leaders:] *You study the scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and it is these same scriptures that testify about me,* **40***but you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.* John 5:39-40 NET

> Although they diligently studied the Scriptures, the Jewish leaders – who had in fact become in many ways ungodly – did not comprehend that the Scriptures spoke about Jesus, the way to life.

The ungodly are ignorant of and deceived about their sin

An evil man is rebellious to the core. He does not fear God, **2**for *he is too proud to recognize and give up his sin.* Psalms 36:1-2 NET

This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, "I have not done wrong." Proverbs 30:20 NET

The ungodly are largely oblivious of God's pending punishment – which they will bear

[God:] At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men

who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.’ Zephaniah 1:12 ESV

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Chapter 34

Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships

A. Prologue: Issues regarding Getting Married

B. Spouses

C. Parents' Duties to Children

D. Children's Duties to Parents

II. Civil Relationships

A. Citizens' Duties to Authorities

B. Authorities' Duties to Citizens

C. Servants and Masters

Part I

Family Relationships

The Bible contains discerning insights and directions regarding relationships with those closest to us. As such these teachings are among the ones which are the most often applicable to our lives.

Section A

Prologue: Issues regarding Getting Married

Unmarried people can be fully devoted to the Lord

[Paul, to believers:] I would like you to be free from worry. *An unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's work, because he is trying to please the Lord.* **33***But a married man concerns himself with worldly matters, because he wants to please his wife;* **34***and so he is pulled in two directions. An unmarried woman or a virgin concerns herself with the Lord's work, because she wants to be dedicated both in body and spirit; but a married woman concerns herself with worldly matters, because she wants to please her husband.* **35**I am saying this because I want to help you. *I am not trying to put restrictions on you. Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourselves completely to the Lord's service without any reservation.* 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 GNT

Do not marry outside of God's people

[Paul, to believers:] *Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?* **15***And what agreement does Christ*

have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NET

A person should have only one spouse

A spiritual leader must have a good reputation. *He must have only one wife* and have children who are believers. Titus 1:6a GW

Remarriage and adultery

[Jesus:] And I say to you: *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery*. Matthew 19:9 ESV

Section B
Spouses

A husband and wife should be as one

The LORD God used the rib from the man to make a woman, and then he brought the woman to the man. **23**And the man said, "Now, *this is someone whose bones came from my bones, whose body came from my body. I will call her 'woman,' because she was taken out of man."* **24***So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.* Genesis 2:22-24 NCV™

> Just as originally the man and the woman were of the one body (vv. 22-23), so a husband and wife will be united as "one body" (v. 24). The term "one body" appears to encompass a oneness in spirit, and is signified and expressed through sexual bonding.

Husbands should love their wives

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her … Ephesians 5:25 NET

This calls for a love that is ever persistent and is all surpassing, even to the point of sacrificing one's life.

Wives should submit to their husbands

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* **24** *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* Ephesians 5:22-24 ESV

Such submission should be voluntary and willing. The corresponding authority of the husband is not about control and should only be practiced in a Christ-like manner and in love, which should characterize all he does in relating to his wife.

Do not commit adultery

You shall not commit adultery. Exodus 20:14 NET

Avoid divorce

So *they* [husband and wife] *are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.* Matthew 19:6 NET

Section C

Parents' Duties to Children

Parents should love their children

[Paul, speaking of women in the church:] In this way they [older women] will train the younger women to love their husbands, *to love their children, …* Titus 2:4 NET

Parents should care for their children

[Paul, to the Thessalonian believers:] But we were gentle when we were with you, *like a mother taking care of her children.* 1 Thessalonians 2:7 GNT

[Moses, speaking to the Israelites of God's care:] You saw how *he brought you safely all the way to this place, just as a father would carry his son.* Deuteronomy 1:31b GNT

Parents should discipline their children

Discipline your children while they are young enough to learn. If you don't, you are helping them to destroy themselves. Proverbs 19:18 GNT

Besides this, *we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.* Hebrews 12:9a ESV

Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to trust and obey God

We will tell the next generation about the LORD's praiseworthy acts, about his strength and the amazing things he has done. **5***He established a rule in Jacob; he set up a law in Israel. He commanded our ancestors to make his deeds known to their descendants,* **6***so that the next generation, children yet to be born, might know about them. They will grow up and tell their descendants about them.* **7***Then they will place their confidence in God. They will not forget the works of God, and they will obey his commands.* Psalms 78:4b-7 NET

This speaks of parents telling their children of God's deeds and power

(v. 4) and subsequently of his commands (vv. 5-6). Verse 7 then concludes that in light of God's wonderful deeds for them, the children would trust God and obey his commands.

Section D
Children's Duties to Parents

Children are to honor their parents

"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment accompanied by a promise, namely, **3**"that it may go well with you and that you will live a long time on the earth." Ephesians 6:2-3 NET

Children are to obey their parents

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Colossians 3:20 ESV

Children should heed their parents' teaching

[A wise father, to his son:] *My son, keep your father's commands, and don't forget your mother's teaching.* **21***Keep their words in mind forever as though you had them tied around your neck.* **22***They will guide you when you walk. They will guard you when you sleep. They will speak to you when you are awake.* **23***These commands are like a lamp; this teaching is like a light. And the correction that comes from them will help you have life.* Proverbs 6:20-23 NCV™

"They will guard you when you sleep" (v. 22) speaks of the security or protection that living by such teaching provides.

Children are to help their parents

But *if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to fulfill their duty toward their own household and so repay their parents what is owed them. For this is what pleases God.* 1 Timothy 5:4 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Civil Relationships

In addition to relationships with family members, the Bible looks at other relationships which have a marked effect on our lives. In doing so, it gives wise and challenging teaching regarding relationships between citizens and governing authorities, and between employees and employers.

Section A

Citizens' Duties to Authorities

Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities

[Paul, on what to teach:] Remind believers to *willingly place themselves under the authority of government officials*. Titus 3:1a GW

As with the command "be subject to", the command to "be obedient" is also given in regard to "rulers and authorities".

For authorities are established by God and punish wrongdoers

Every person should obey the government in power. No government would exist if it hadn't been established by God. The governments which exist have been put in place by God. **2***Therefore, whoever resists the government opposes what God has established. Those who resist will bring punishment on themselves.* **3***People who do what is right don't have to be afraid of the government. But people who*

do what is wrong should be afraid of it. Romans 13:1-3a GW

But citizens should defy commands that conflict with God's will

Nebuchadnezzar spoke up and said: 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! He sent his angel to deliver his servants who trusted in him. *They disobeyed the king's command and were willing to risk their lives in order not to serve or worship any god except their own God.* Daniel 3:28 ISV

The chief priest questioned them. **28***He said, "We gave you strict orders not to mention Jesus' name when you teach. Yet, you've filled Jerusalem with your teachings. You want to take revenge on us for putting that man to death."* **29***Peter and the other apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than people.* Acts 5:27b-29 GW

Section B
Authorities' Duties to Citizens

Authorities should act and rule according to God's ways

[Moses, giving instructions for a king:] *When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests.* **19***It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out.* Deuteronomy 17:18-19 NET

And *he* [King Hezekiah] *did what was right in the eyes of the LORD*, according to all that David his father had done. 2 Kings 18:3 ESV

Authorities should rule as servants of God and their people

[Paul:] Would you like to be unafraid of those in authority? Then do what is good, and they will praise you, **4**because *they are God's servants working for your own good*. Romans 13:3b-4a GNT

[Elders, to King Rehoboam], "If you will *be a servant to this people today and serve them*, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever." 1 Kings 12:7b ESV

Authorities should rule wisely

[God, to Israel:] I will give you leaders who will be faithful to me. *They will lead you with knowledge and insight.* Jeremiah 3:15 NET

Authorities should rule justly

[The queen of Sheba, to King Solomon:] Because of your God's love for Israel and his lasting commitment to them, *he made you king over them so you could make just and right decisions*. 2 Chronicles 9:8b NET

Authorities should defend the needy

[Instructions to a king:] *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing.* **9***Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy."* Proverbs 31:8-9 NCV™

Section C
Servants and Masters

A number of verses in this section refer to slaves rather than servants.

Generally the teaching regarding one of them is also very much applicable to the other.

Servants should be obedient, submissive and respectful

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching – like those who are strictly people–pleasers – *but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.* Colossians 3:22 NET

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 1 Peter 2:18 ESV

Servants should be trustworthy and faithful

They [slaves] *should not steal from them but should show their masters they can be fully trusted* so that in everything they do they will make the teaching of God our Savior attractive. Titus 2:10 NCV™

And he [a servant] 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.'* **21***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.' Matthew 25:20-21 ESV

Masters must treat servants justly

Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. Colossians 4:1 NET

Masters must not withhold servants' wages

You must not withhold the wages of the hired laborer overnight until morning. Leviticus 19:13b NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 35

Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions

A. Tell People the Gospel

B. What Things to Explain

C. How to Spread the Message

D. Supplementary Actions

II. Insights

A. Insights on the Gospel Message

B. The Need to Spread the Gospel

C. God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

Part I

Instructions

The theme of spreading the gospel pervades the NT and should be a key focus in our lives. This section largely looks at what we need to say and do, in advancing the spread of the gospel.

Section A

Tell People the Gospel

Tell people the gospel message about Jesus Christ

Then Philip began to speak, and, starting from this Scripture, *he told him* [an Ethiopian] *the good news about Jesus*. Acts 8:35 ISV

[Paul:] Timothy, our brother, works with us for God and *helps us tell people the Good News about Christ*. 1 Thessalonians 3:2b NCV™

Tell all people, everywhere

Then he [Jesus] told them: *Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world. …* **20***Then the disciples left and preached everywhere*. Mark 16:15, 20a CEV

Do not be ashamed of the gospel

[Paul:] For *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes*, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 NET

Section B
What Things to Explain

Explain who Jesus Christ is

Soon he [Paul] went to the Jewish meeting places and started *telling people that Jesus is the Son of God*. Acts 9:20 CEV

Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, *testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ*. Acts 18:5b NET

[Peter, to a crowd of largely Jews:] Therefore *let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ*. Acts 2:36 NET

Tell people about Jesus' death and resurrection . . .

[Paul:] *I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance:* **4***that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures;* **5***that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures; that he appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles.* 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 GNT

. . . and tell people about the results

What we mean is that *God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace.* 2 Corinthians 5:19 CEV

> We are to tell others that because of Jesus Christ's death, their sins can be forgiven and they can be at peace with God.

Tell people about the kingdom of God

From morning until evening he [Paul] *explained things to them, testifying about the kingdom of God* and trying to convince them about Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets. Acts 28:23b NET

Tell people about what God is like and what he has done . . .

Sing to the LORD! Bless his name! *Proclaim his deliverance every day!*
[3]*Declare his glory among the nations and his awesome deeds among all the peoples!* Psalms 96:2-3 ISV

> This illustrates that we should proclaim God's salvation, glory and marvelous deeds to all people and nations.

. . . and tell what God has done for you

[Jesus, to a man he had healed:] *"Return to your home, and declare what God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole town what Jesus had done for him.* Luke 8:39 NET

Tell people how they should respond

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

Section C
How to Spread the Message

Present the gospel accurately and plainly

He [Apollos] had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and with great

enthusiasm *he spoke and taught accurately the facts about Jesus,* although he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18:25 NET

[Paul:] We use no trickery, and *we do not change the teaching of God. We teach the truth plainly,* showing everyone who we are. Then they can know in their hearts what kind of people we are in God's sight. 2 Corinthians 4:2b NCV™

Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit

They [past prophets] were shown that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things now announced to you through *those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit* sent from heaven – things angels long to catch a glimpse of. 1 Peter 1:12 NET

> Spreading the gospel by the Holy Spirit involves relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance and power (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Spread the gospel boldly – with God's help

So he [Saul] was staying with them, associating openly with them in Jerusalem, *speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord*. Acts 9:28 NET

[Paul, to the Thessalonian believers:] As you remember, we had been mistreated and insulted at Philippi. *But God gave us the courage to tell you the good news about him, even though many people caused us trouble.* 1 Thessalonians 2:2 CEV

Work hard at spreading the gospel message

[Paul:] So we preach Christ to everyone. With all possible wisdom we warn and teach them in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ. **29***To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies and which is at work in me.* Colossians 1:28-29

GNT

Note that here Paul is probably referring to his evangelistic work in spreading the gospel as well as to his pastoral work amongst Christians.

Section D
Supplementary Actions

Pray for your proclamation of the gospel . . .

[The early believers:] And now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and *grant to your servants to speak your message with great courage,* **30***while you extend your hand to heal, and to bring about miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* **31***When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God courageously.* Acts 4:29-31 NET

. . . and pray for others who proclaim the gospel

[Paul, to believers:] *Be sure to pray that God will make a way for us to spread his message and explain the mystery about Christ,* even though I am in jail for doing this. **4***Please pray that I will make the message as clear as possible.* Colossians 4:3-4 CEV

Pray for the salvation of unbelievers

[Paul:] Brothers and sisters, *my heart's desire and prayer to God on behalf of my fellow Israelites is for their salvation.* Romans 10:1 NET

Act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel

[Paul, to believers:] Just *do as I do; I try to please everyone in all that I do, not thinking of my own good, but of the good of all, so that they might be saved.*
1 Corinthians 10:33 GNT

Act in a way that is consistent with the gospel

[Paul, to believers:] Only *conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ* so that – whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent – I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, … Philippians 1:27 NET

> Conducting oneself "in a manner worthy of the gospel" – a manner consistent with its message – is an important aspect of "contending… for the faith of the gospel".

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Insights

This section provides insights on the gospel message itself and on why it is so critical that we tell others the gospel. It also teaches us that in all our efforts to do so, we must bear in mind that the effectiveness of the message comes from God – and that people's responses to it are in his hands, not ours.

Section A
Insights on the Gospel Message

The gospel is not made up by men – it is true

[Paul:] Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that *the gospel I preached is not of human origin.* **12***For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.* Galatians 1:11-12 NET

But Paul replied, "I have not lost my mind, most excellent Festus, but *am speaking true and rational words.* **26***For the king knows about these things*, and I am speaking freely to him, because *I cannot believe that any of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner*. Acts 26:25-26 NET

> Verse 26 makes a very important point attesting to the truth of the gospel. The events it is based on were widely known, familiar to the king, as they did not take place in some obscure setting.

The gospel reveals God's secret plan concerning Jesus

Christ

[Paul:] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, *to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* **9***and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God* who created all things, … Ephesians 3:8b-9 ESV

The gospel is good news

God sent his word to the people of Israel and brought them *the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ*. Acts 10:36a GW

Note that the Greek word which is often translated as “gospel” basically means “good news”.

Section B

The Need to Spread the Gospel

We are responsible for telling others the gospel

[Paul:] For *I have an obligation to all peoples, to the civilized and to the savage, to the educated and to the ignorant.* **15***So then, I am eager to preach the Good News to you also* who live in Rome. Romans 1:14-15 GNT

Like Paul, believers have an obligation or responsibility to tell all people – people of all nations and levels of understanding.

Through believers spreading the gospel others come to believe

[Jesus:] I’m not praying only for them [the disciples]. I’m also praying for *those who will believe in me through their message*. John 17:20 GW

But *a lot of people who had heard the message believed it.* Acts 4:4a CEV

There are many people ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them

When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37**Then he said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.* **38***Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."* Matthew 9:36-38 NET

There are many ready to respond to the gospel – to be "harvested". But more workers are needed to proclaim the gospel to them.

The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it

[Paul, to the Ephesian believers:] And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, *the Good News that brought you salvation.* Ephesians 1:13a GNT

[Jesus, to his disciples:] Go into all the world and *preach the gospel to every creature.* **16***The one who believes and is baptized will be saved,* but the one who does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:15b-16 NET

Section C
God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

The gospel is the power of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world

[Paul:] For I am not ashamed of *the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes*, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 NET

[Paul:] For *the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* 1 Corinthians 1:18 NET

The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power

[Paul, to the Corinthians:] *My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power,* **5***so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God.* 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NET

> The effectiveness of Paul's message was not due to any great display of wisdom on his part, but to the Holy Spirit and God's power, working through him and in the minds of his listeners.

The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief

[Jesus, to his disciples:] When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father – *the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me*, **27**and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. John 15:26-27 NET

> The Holy Spirit testifies to non-believers about the reality of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel message. He does this often through believers as they tell others the gospel (which Jesus quite possibly alludes to here). This work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the effectiveness of the gospel's proclamation (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3).

God and Jesus at times confirm the gospel message by miracles

They [Paul and Barnabas] *spoke boldly about the Lord, who confirmed their message about his good will by having them perform miracles and do amazing things.* Acts 14:3 GW

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Unit 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

Chapter 36

Standing Firm

I. General

A. Be Faithful to God

B. Remember God and His Word

C. Hold to the Faith

D. Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

II. Spiritual Warfare

A. The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

B. Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

C. Counteraction of Demons

D. Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

Part 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.

Section A

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

Serve God faithfully

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

Do not be unfaithful to God by not obeying him

So Saul died because *he was unfaithful to the LORD and did not obey the LORD's instructions …* 1 Chronicles 10:13a NET

Section B

Remember God and His Word

Ensure you remember 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*, 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. Deuteronomy 8:11, 18 NET

Remember what God has done

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

Remember God's word and commands

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

Persistently meditate on God's word and commands

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

Section C

Hold to the Faith

Continue to live by Christian teaching

[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*. 3 John 1:3 GNT

Grow in your knowledge of God

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

Stand firm until the end . . .

[Jesus, to his disciples:] And you will be hated by everyone because of my name. But *the one who endures to the end will be saved*. Matthew 10:22 NET

. . . 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

Section D
Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

See also:

- The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

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

“So keep on watching, because you don’t know on what day your Lord is coming. **43** *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.* **44** *So you, too, must be ready, because at an hour you are not expecting him the Son of Man will come.”* Matthew 24:42-44 ISV

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

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.* Matthew 24:4-14, 26-27 NET

In v. 8 “birth pains” denotes the time of distress which leads into – or “gives birth” to – the reign of the Messiah, following his return.

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Spiritual Warfare

Living as God wants 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.

Section A
The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

Believers have spiritual enemies, notably Satan

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.* Ephesians 6:12 NET

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

> The believer's struggle is primarily and ultimately against spiritual powers.

Believers have human enemies

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. Philippians 1:28a 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

[Peter:] 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*. 1 Peter 2:11 ISV

But God and Jesus enable Christians to overcome

[Paul:] What then shall we say about these things? *If God is for us, who can be against us? …* **37**No, *in all these things we have complete victory through him* [Christ] *who loved us!* Romans 8:31, 37 NET

Section 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.

Resist Satan

But *resist the devil and he will flee from you*. James 4:7b NET

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.* **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, …* 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 (cf. NASB, NCV, NKJV). Possibly a readiness to proclaim this gospel is in view.

Spiritual weapons and armor include: 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

. . . God's word; . . .

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

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. 1 Thessalonians 5:8).

. . . and prayer

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

Section C

Counteraction of Demons

Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons

[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. …* **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.* 1 John 4:1-3a, 6 ISV

> John says that his readers could tell if the spirit influencing a prophet is the Holy Spirit or an evil one by whether or not the prophet acknowledged Jesus, in particular whether they acknowledged that he had come in the flesh. To do so would be indicative of the Holy Spirit's conviction. Presumably this test for recognizing the Holy Spirit can be applied to other truths about Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 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.

Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ's "name"

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*. Acts 16:18 NET

The Holy Spirit and prayer also figure in driving out demons

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

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."* Mark 9:28-29 NET

Section 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.

Avoid witchcraft and other occult practices

[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,* **11***cast spells, ask ghosts or spirits for help, or consult the dead.* Deuteronomy 18:10-11 GW

Do not consult anyone who performs occult practices

Do not go for advice to people who consult the spirits of the dead. Leviticus 19:31a GNT

Do not have other "gods" or idols

[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. Exodus 20:2-6 NET

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 37

Rejecting Sin

I. Encountering Sin

A. Consequences of Sin for God's People

B. Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God

C. Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God

D. God's Response to Repentance

II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

A. Avoiding Sin

B. Alternatives to Sin

C. Be Holy

Part I

Encountering Sin

Inevitably on occasions sin “leaks” into our lives, with its ill effects on ourselves and on our relationship with God. But if we address it as the Bible says to, God promises to forgive our sins and take in hand its effects.

Note that the teaching in this section is applicable to both new believers ridding themselves of their old ways and to believers returning to God after having lapsed into sin. However, the focus is more on the latter.

Section A

Consequences of Sin for God’s People

Sin deprives God’s people of his blessings

[God, to unfaithful Israel:] *Your misdeeds have stopped these things from coming. Your sins have deprived you of my bounty.* Jeremiah 5:25 NET

God may punish sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish

[David, to God:] *My whole body is sick because of your judgment; I am deprived of health because of my sin.* **4***For my sins overwhelm me; like a heavy load, they are too much for me to bear. …* **8***I am numb with pain and severely battered; I groan loudly because of the anxiety I feel.* Psalms 38:3-4, 8 NET

Sin defiles God’s people – making them spiritually unclean

They [the sinful Israelites] *were defiled by their deeds,* and unfaithful in their actions. Psalms 106:39 NET

Jerusalem has sinned greatly, therefore she has become unclean. Lamentations 1:8a ISV

God turns away from those who persist in sin

Someday these sinners will cry to the LORD for help, but he will not answer them. He will hide his face from them at that time, because they have done such wicked deeds. Micah 3:4 NET

Section B
Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God

Even if sin has not led to a believer completely falling away from God, all sin hinders one from being fully devoted to God to some extent. Thus one needs to turn away from any sin and return to being completely devoted to God.

Stop sinning

Sober up as you should, and *stop sinning!* 1 Corinthians 15:34a NET

Return to God with all your heart

"Yet even now," the LORD says, *"return to me with all your heart – with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Tear your hearts, not just your garments!"*
13*Return to the LORD your God,* for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and boundless in loyal love – often relenting from calamitous

punishment. Joel 2:12-13 NET

In returning from sin to God, do what God wants

[Ezra the priest, to the unfaithful people:] Now then, confess your sins to the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and *do what pleases him*. Ezra 10:11 GNT

[Hosea, to Israel:] But *you must return to your God, by maintaining love and justice*, and by waiting for your God to return to you. Hosea 12:6 NET

Section C
Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God

Confess your sin to God

As soon as you discover that you have committed any of these sins, *you must confess what you have done*. Leviticus 5:5 CEV

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™

A “broken” spirit or heart is one that is deeply remorseful.

Humble yourself before God over your sin

The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!’ Luke 18:13 NET

Ask God for forgiveness and restoration

[David, to God after committing terrible sin:] *God, be merciful to me because you are loving. Because you are always ready to be merciful, wipe out all my wrongs.* **2***Wash away all my guilt and make me clean again. …* **7***Take away my sin, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.* **8***Make me hear sounds of joy and gladness; let the bones you crushed be happy again.* **9***Turn your face from my sins and wipe out all my guilt.* **10***Create in me a pure heart, God, and make my spirit right again.* **11***Do not send me away from you or take your Holy Spirit away from me.* **12***Give me back the joy of your salvation. Keep me strong by giving me a willing spirit.* Psalms 51:1-2, 7-12 NCV™

Section D

God's Response to Repentance

God forgives our sins

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

God restores our relationship with him

So tell the people [of Judah]: This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: *'Return to me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD All-Powerful.* Zechariah 1:3 NCV™

[God:] *I will be their God and they will be my people. For they will wholeheartedly return to me.* Jeremiah 24:7b NET

Here God in effect promises his unfaithful people that if they returned to him wholeheartedly, he would restore his relationship with them to what

it should be. As such, they would again be his people and he would be their God.

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Part II

Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

The Bible does not merely tell us not to sin. It also helps us not to do so by giving sound instructions and alternatives to sin. In conjunction with this, the Bible calls us to be holy – i.e. to live pure lives, set apart from all that is ungodly.

Section A

Avoiding Sin

See also:

- . . . Fearing God compels one to avoid sin
- Engaging in Spiritual Warfare
- Epilogue: Be Wary

Take care in avoiding sin

[Paul, to believers:] *Even if you think you can stand up to temptation, be careful not to fall.* 1 Corinthians 10:12 CEV

Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .

[David, to God:] Moreover, *keep me from committing flagrant sins; do not allow such sins to control me.* Then I will be blameless, and innocent of blatant rebellion. Psalms 19:13 NET

. . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help

us withstand temptation

[Paul, to believers:] No temptation has overtaken you that is unusual for human beings. But *God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. Instead, along with the temptation he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to endure it.* 1 Corinthians 10:13 ISV

For *we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one* [Christ] *who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.* **16***Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.* Hebrews 4:15-16 NET

Use God's word to avoid sin

[A psalmist, to God:] *How can a young person maintain a pure life? By guarding it according to your instructions! …* **11***In my heart I store up your words, so I might not sin against you.* Psalms 119:9, 11 NET

Avoid sinful desires

[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*. 1 Peter 2:11 ISV

Get rid of sinful influences

[Jesus, speaking figuratively:] *If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.* It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. **9***And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.* It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into fiery hell. Matthew 18:8-9 NET

These instructions are not meant to be taken literally. They are hyperbole, emphasizing that one should do whatever is needed to get rid of sinful influences and avoid sin.

Hate evil and sin

[Wisdom personified:] To fear the LORD is to *hate evil. I hate pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and twisted speech.* Proverbs 8:13 GW

Section B
Alternatives to Sin

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

[Paul, to believers:] He [God] condemned sin in the flesh [4]so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who *do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* [5]For *those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* Romans 8:3b-5 ISV

Our human nature ("the flesh") is essentially sinful. But God has given his Holy Spirit to believers. As such, we are to live by God's Holy Spirit. This involves: being both alert to and responsive to the Spirit's promptings; and being reliant on his power, to enable and transform us. In conjunction with this, our minds should be focused on "things of the Spirit" (v. 5).

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

[Paul, to believers:] *Just as you once offered the parts of your body as slaves to*

impurity and to greater and greater disobedience, so now, in the same way, you must offer the parts of your body as slaves to righteousness that leads to sanctification. … **22**But now that *you have been freed from sin and have become God's slaves,* the benefit you reap is sanctification, and the result is eternal life. Romans 6:19b, 22 ISV

One of the most effective preventative measures against sinning is to be preoccupied with doing good – as is the case when one lives as a slave to righteousness and God.

Section C
Be Holy

To be holy involves being separated from corruptive influences and totally dedicated to God. As such it includes moral purity and obedience to God. The ongoing process of becoming increasingly holy is largely facilitated by God, but in accordance believers are called upon to be holy. (See also the introductory comment on God Makes His People Holy.)

Be holy as God is holy

[Peter, to believers:] As obedient children, do not be shaped by the desires that you once had in your ignorance. **15**Instead, *just as the one who called you is holy, be holy in every aspect of your life.* **16***For it is written, "You must be holy, because I am holy."* 1 Peter 1:14-16 ISV

If we are to be God's people, acceptable to him, we need to be holy because: God is holy and so does not accept anything that is not holy. Therefore we should aspire to be holy, like God.

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

The lambs were eaten by the Israelites who had returned from exile and by *all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of the non-Jews in the land to worship the LORD God of Israel*. Ezra 6:21 GW

Do not conform to this world

Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well–pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2 NET

> In the NT the "world" often refers to the system of values, attitudes and behavior commonplace in society – along with the people and social structures that conform to this system. This system is largely antagonistic towards or dismissive of God. As such, the "world" is essentially evil, and so it is imperative that believers do not conform to it.

Do not live as other people do

[Paul, to believers:] So I tell you and encourage you in the Lord's name *not to live any longer like other people in the world. Their minds are set on worthless things.* Ephesians 4:17 GW

Avoid bad company

[David:] *I do not keep company with worthless people; I have nothing to do with hypocrites.* **5***I hate the company of the evil and avoid the wicked.* Psalms 26:4-5 GNT

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 38

Major Pitfalls

I. Pride

A. Pride in Thought

B. Pride in Action

C. Outcomes of Pride

D. Antithesis of Pride: Humility

II. Riches and Sex

A. Riches and Godliness

B. Further Warnings about Riches

C. Sexual Sin

D. Prohibited Forms of Sex

E. Epilogue: Be Wary

Part I

Pride

Pride is one of the greatest dangers to one's life as a believer, yet it is also one of the most subtle. Pride has an adverse effect on both our relationship with God and our relationships with others. The opposite to pride is humility, which correspondingly is very much a key factor in living an ongoing and effective Christian life.

Section A

Pride in Thought

Do not be proud

Hear and give ear; *be not proud*, for the LORD has spoken. Jeremiah 13:15 ESV

Do not think you are better than others

He [the king] *should not think he is better than his fellow Israelites,* and he must not stop obeying the law in any way … Deuteronomy 17:20a NCV™

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

Do not be self-righteous

Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous

and looked down on everyone else. **10**"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11***The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers – or even like this tax collector.* **12***I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'* **13**The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!' **14***I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."*
Luke 18:9-14 NET

Section B
Pride in Action

Do not exalt yourself . . .

Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of the great; … Proverbs 25:6 NKJV

The second part seems to speak of claiming a place among the great.

. . . Honor others, rather than yourself

[Paul, to believers:] Love each other as brothers and sisters and *honor others more than you do yourself.* Romans 12:10 CEV

[Paul, to believers:] Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to *treat one another as more important than yourself.* Philippians 2:3 NET

Do not boast about yourself

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips. Proverbs 27:2 NET

Section C
Outcomes of Pride

Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God

[Moses, to the Israelites:] … *make sure that you do not become proud and forget the LORD your God* who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. Deuteronomy 8:14 GNT

[A psalmist, to God:] *The wicked are too proud to turn to you or even think about you.* Psalms 10:4 CEV

In their pride, the wicked have no desire and see no need to seek God, often due to a perceived self-sufficiency. Being "full of themselves" they have no room for God in their lives.

Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding

[God, to the nation of Edom:] *Your pride has deceived you. Your capital is a fortress of solid rock; your home is high in the mountains, and so you say to yourself, 'Who can ever pull me down?'* **4***Even though you make your home as high as an eagle's nest, so that it seems to be among the stars, yet I will pull you down.* Obadiah 1:3-4 GNT

[Paul, speaking of a typical false teacher:] *This person is full of pride and understands nothing,* but is sick with a love for arguing and fighting about

words. 1 Timothy 6:4a NCV™

Pride leads to one's downfall

Before destruction the heart of a person is proud, but humility comes before honor. Proverbs 18:12 NET

Section D
Antithesis of Pride: Humility

Humility is the opposite of pride. It is a most critical attitude for maintaining one's guard against things that can cause one to fall – spiritually and otherwise. This is in contrast to pride which opens oneself up to many kinds of destructive dangers (as reflected in the previous section, *Outcomes of Pride*).

Be humble – particularly before God

This is what the LORD requires from you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to *live humbly with your God*. Micah 6:8b GW

Then he [an angelic messenger] said to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day you applied your mind to understand and to *humble yourself before your God*, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words. Daniel 10:12 NET

Be humble towards others

Be humble and gentle in every way. Ephesians 4:2a GW

[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

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Riches and Sex

Riches and sex are both good in themselves; in fact they are blessings from God. However they both are easily and often misused, bringing ill effects for both ourselves and others. Indeed, few things have the capacity of riches or sex for both good and harm. So it should be no surprise that they feature so prominently in the Bible's teaching on our relationships with others and moreover our relationship with God.

Section A

Riches and Godliness

See also:

- Do not trust in riches
- Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God

Do not accumulate for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. **20**But accumulate for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. …* **24***"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.* Matthew 6:19-21, 24 NET

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, *"How hard it is for the rich*

to enter the kingdom of God! Mark 10:23 NET

Riches even draw one away from God

But *people who want to get rich keep toppling into temptation and are trapped by many stupid and harmful desires that plunge them into destruction and ruin.* **10***For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, in their eagerness to get rich, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with much pain.* 1 Timothy 6:9-10 ISV

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

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for God has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you." Hebrews 13:5 ISV

Section B
Further Warnings about Riches

Riches are not secure

[Paul, instructing Timothy what to teach believers:] Tell those who have the riches of this world not to be arrogant and *not to place their confidence in anything as uncertain as riches*. Instead, they should place their confidence in God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17 GW

Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them

Surely one sees that even wise people die; fools and spiritually insensitive people all pass away and leave their wealth to others. Psalms 49:10 NET

For *we did not bring anything into the world, and surely we cannot take anything out of it*. 1 Timothy 6:7 ISV

Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

[Jesus:] But *woe to you who are rich, for you have received your comfort already.* **25** *"Woe to you who are well satisfied with food now, for you will be hungry.* Luke 6:24-25a NET

Section C
Sexual Sin

Avoid sexual sin

[Paul, to believers:] But *among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind*, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints. Ephesians 5:3 NET

The experts in the law and the Pharisees *brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery*. They made her stand in front of them **4**and said to Jesus, "Teacher, *this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. …* **7**When they persisted in asking him, he stood up straight and replied, "Whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her." **8**Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. **9**Now when they heard this, they began to drift away one at a time, starting with the older ones, until Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. **10**Jesus stood up straight and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" **11**She replied, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you either. *Go, and from now on do not sin any more."* John 8:3-4, 7-11 NET

Sexual sin has ill consequences

Keep on running away from sexual immorality. *Any other sin that a person commits is outside his body, but the person who sins sexually sins against his own body.* 1 Corinthians 6:18 ISV

In contrast to other sins, sexual sin involves the misuse and mistreatment of one's own body. Moreover, Paul seems to imply that sexual sin adversely affects the body or one's being in a deeper way than any other sin (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Sexual sin ultimately results in God's judgment

Marriage must be honored among all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for *God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.* Hebrews 13:4 NET

Section D

Prohibited Forms of Sex

See also:

- Do not rape
- Do not commit adultery

Lust

[Jesus:] You have heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.' **28***But I say to you, anyone who stares at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* Matthew 5:27-28 ISV

Gazing longingly at a woman with sexual desire, is committing adultery in one's heart and in a spiritual sense.

Sex apart from marriage

[Moses, speaking of any woman who had had premarital sex:] *She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by having sexual relations before she was married.* You must get rid of the evil among you. Deuteronomy 22:21b NCV™

Prostitution

[Paul, to believers:] *Surely you know that your bodies are parts of Christ himself. So I must never take the parts of Christ and join them to a prostitute!*
1 Corinthians 6:15 NCV™

Homosexual acts

[Paul, speaking of ungodly people:] For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For *their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones,* **27** *and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.* Romans 1:26-27 NET

> This teaches that homosexual relations are unnatural. In v. 27, the phrase “received in themselves the due penalty” implies that the committing of such acts carries its own natural consequences.

Section E
Epilogue: Be Wary

Be alert and sober

So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must *stay alert and sober*.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 NET

Examine and evaluate yourself

Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Lamentations 3:40 ESV

Keep a clear conscience

Paul looked straight at the Council and said, “Brothers, *with a clear conscience I have done my duty before God up to this very day*.” Acts 23:1 ISV

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 39

Hard Times

I. General

A. Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times

B. Mourn Loss

C. Keep in Mind God and His Word

D. Trust in God

E. Hope in God and Wait for Him

II. Praying in Hard Times

A. Tell God about Your Problems

B. Ask God for Help

C. Praise and Rejoice in God

D. Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering

Part I

General

Hard times are experienced by all Christians. This reality is reflected in the Bible, notably in Job and Psalms. But the Bible also shows that there are a number of practical and effective things that we can do when undergoing hard times.

Note that the following chapter looks at experiencing persecution due to one's faith. This chapter deals with undergoing hard times in general – particularly when one is hurting or "down" – irrespective of whether such times are a result of one's faith or not. As such the responses discussed in this chapter, supplement or reinforce the responses to persecution that are given in the following chapter.

Section A

Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times

See also:

- God Disciplines His People
- The Reality of Persecution

Trouble is characteristic of human life

[Eliphaz:] But *a person is born for trouble as surely as sparks fly up from a fire*.
Job 5:7 GW

Examples of God's people undergoing hard times

Elijah was afraid, so he got up and fled for his life to Beer Sheba in Judah. He left his servant there, **4**while he went a day's journey into the desert. He went and sat down under a shrub and *asked the LORD to take his life: "I've had enough! Now, O LORD, take my life. After all, I'm no better than my ancestors."*
1 Kings 19:3-4 NET

[Job:] *I have no ease, I have no quietness; I cannot rest; turmoil has come upon me.* Job 3:26 NET

An example of hard times even being attributed to God

[Naomi:] Call me Mara, because *God has made my life bitter.* **21***I had everything when I left, but the LORD has brought me back with nothing.* How can you still call me Naomi, when *God has turned against me and made my life so hard*?
Ruth 1:20b-21 CEV

Section B
Mourn Loss

Mourn and weep over loss – particularly deaths

Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, *my brother would not have died."* **33**When *Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come with her weeping*, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed. **34**He asked, "Where have you laid him?" They replied, "Lord, come and see." **35***Jesus wept.*
John 11:32-35 NET

Some devout men buried Stephen, mourning for him with loud cries. Acts 8:2 GNT

Mourn before God

The men of Ai killed about thirty–six of them [Israelites] and chased them from in front of the city gate all the way to the fissures and defeated them on the steep slope. The people's courage melted away like water. **6***Joshua tore his clothes; he and the leaders of Israel lay face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD until evening and threw dirt on their heads.* Joshua 7:5-6 NET

> The actions of Joshua and the leaders (v. 6) signified mourning. Particularly as the ark signified God's presence amongst the Israelites, this is an example of people mourning before God.

Section C

Keep in Mind God and His Word

In hard times, remember God

[Nehemiah, speaking to his people about enemy threats:] *"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the great and awesome Lord*, and fight on behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families!" NEHEMIAH 4:14b NET

Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it

[A psalmist, to God:] Though rulers plot and slander me, *your servant meditates on your statutes*. … **166**I hope for your deliverance, O LORD, and *I obey your commands*. Psalms 119:23, 166 NET

Take comfort in God's word

[A psalmist, to God:] *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives*

me life. … [52]*When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.*
Psalms 119:50, 52 ESV

In v. 50 the psalmist says that his comfort in suffering is God's promise which preserves or "revives" (NET) his life, through the hope that it gives.

Section D
Trust in God

See also:

- Faith and Hope
- [What to do in persecution:] Have Faith in God and Pray

Trust in God

[David, to God:] 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 31:13b-15 ISV

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

Take refuge in God, for God saves and protects those who do

The one who lives in the shelter of the Most High and who abides in the shadow of the Almighty [2]*will say to the LORD, "You are my refuge, my fortress, and my*

God in whom I trust!” [3]*He will surely deliver you from the hunter’s snare and from the destructive plague.* [4]*With his feathers he will cover you, and under his wings you will find safety. His truth is your shield and armor.* [5]*You need not fear terror that stalks in the night, the arrow that flies in the day;* [6]*plague that strikes in the darkness, or calamity that destroys at noon.* [7]*If a thousand fall at your side or ten thousand at your right hand, it will not overcome you. …* [9]*“O LORD, you are my refuge!” Because you chose the Most High as your dwelling place,* [10]*no evil will fall upon you, and no affliction will approach your tent,* [11]*for he will command his angels to protect you in all your ways.* [12]*With their hands they will lift you up so you will not trip over a stone.* Psalms 91:1-7, 9-12 ISV

Section E
Hope in God and Wait for Him

Put your hope in God . . .

[A psalmist:] *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation* [6]*and my God.* Psalms 42:5-6a ESV

[Jeremiah:] Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! [20]My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. [21]*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:* [22]*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;* [23]*they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Lamentations 3:19-23 ESV

. . . Look resolutely and expectantly to God

[David:] *I continually look to the LORD for help, for he will free my feet from the enemy’s net.* Psalms 25:15 NET

[Jehoshaphat, as Judah faced invasion:] O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. *We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you*. 2 Chronicles 20:12 ESV

Wait for God, with confidence that he will act

[David:] *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* **14***Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!* Psalms 27:13-14 ESV

> Note that God's action on behalf of his troubled people is not always simply the removal of the cause of their trouble. It may instead involve strengthening his people to cope with the trouble, with inner joy and peace.

Wait quietly and patiently

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Psalms 37:7 ESV

➜ *Bible Study Questions*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Part II

Praying in Hard Times

Prayer is probably the most prominent positive response to hard times. The Bible shows us a great deal about praying to God in such times. The psalms in particular contain a number of prayers of people faced with great difficulties and suffering, from which we can learn much.

Section A

Tell God about Your Problems

When facing trouble, pray to God

[God:] *Pray to me when you are in trouble!* I will deliver you, and you will honor me! Psalms 50:15 NET

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises. James 5:13 NET

Tell God of your plight and how you feel

[David, to God:] Do not remain far away from me, for *trouble is near and I have no one to help me. …* **14***My strength drains away like water; all my bones are dislocated; my heart is like wax; it melts away inside me.* Psalms 22:11, 14 NET

[David, to God:] Turn to me and have mercy on me, because *I am lonely and hurting.* **17***My troubles have grown larger*; free me from my problems. **18***Look at my suffering and troubles*, and take away all my sins. **19***Look at how many enemies I have! See how much they hate me!* Psalms 25:16-19 NCV™

Pour out your heart to God

Trust in him at all times, you people! *Pour out your hearts before him!* God is our shelter! (Selah) Psalms 62:8 NET

[Hannah:] *I have poured out my soul to the LORD.* **16** *… I have spoken from my deep pain and anguish.* 1 Samuel 1:15b, 16b NET

> To pour out your heart to God involves telling God about all your concerns and feelings. In a sense it is to empty your heart of all its troubles, laying them out before God.

Section B
Ask God for Help

See also:

- Making Requests
- [In persecution:] Have Faith in God and Pray

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

Ask God for strength

[A psalmist, to God:] My soul melts away for sorrow; *strengthen me according to your word!* Psalms 119:28 ESV

Ask God to guide you

[David, to God:] May I hear about your loyal love in the morning, for I trust in you. *Show me the way I should go,* because I long for you. Psalms 143:8 NET

Ask God for deliverance

[David:] O God, because of your great loyal love, *answer me with your faithful deliverance!* **14***Rescue me from the mud! Don't let me sink! Deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep water!* Psalms 69:13b-14 NET

Persist in prayer to God

LORD, you are the God who saves me. *I cry out to you day and night.* Psalms 88:1 NCV™

Section C
Praise and Rejoice in God

Praise and thank God amidst trouble

He [Jehoshaphat] met with the people and *appointed musicians to play before the LORD and praise his majestic splendor. As they marched ahead of the warriors they said: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his loyal love endures."* **22***When they began to shout and praise,* the LORD suddenly attacked the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. 2 Chronicles 20:21-22 NET

[Job, responding to horrific loss:] *The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* Job 1:21b ESV

Rejoice in God amidst trouble

[Habakkuk:] Even though the fig tree does not blossom, and there are no grapes on the vines; even if the olive harvest fails, and the fields produce nothing edible; even if the flock is snatched from the sheepfold, and there is no herd in the stalls— **18***as for me, I will rejoice in the LORD. I will find my joy in the God of my deliverance.* Habakkuk 3:17-18 ISV

Section D

Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering

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 his people in hard times

[David, to God:] *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; *your rod and your staff, they comfort me*. Psalms 23:4 ESV

[Paul, to believers:] Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* **4***who comforts us in all our troubles* so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with *the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NET

Testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble

[David:] *I sought the LORD's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all*

my fears. … **6***This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; he saved him from all his troubles.* Psalms 34:4, 6 NET

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 40

Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People

A. The Reality of Persecution

B. The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

C. God's Care of Persecuted Believers

II. What to Do in Persecution

A. Be Faithful to God and Endure

B. Have Faith in God and Pray

C. Rejoice

D. Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

Part I

The Persecution of God's People

The Bible warns that faithfully following God inevitably results in persecution and difficulties. In fact in a number of countries today severe persecution of Christians is common. Additionally, the Bible speaks of a time just prior to Jesus Christ's return when persecution will be severe worldwide. But along with such warnings, the Bible gives wonderful and powerful promises of God's care for his people in the face of persecution.

Section A
The Reality of Persecution

Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .

Now *in fact all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* 2 Timothy 3:12 NET

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *People will put you out of their synagogues. Yes, the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are offering service to God.* **3***They will do this because they have not known the Father and they have not known me.* **4***I have told you these things now so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.* John 16:2-4a NCV™

. . . It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering

"We must endure many hardships to get into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22b ISV

[Peter, to believers:] This brings you great joy, although *you may have to suffer*

for a short time in various trials. 1 Peter 1:6 NET

Spreading the gospel can result in suffering

[Paul:] *My work is to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher.* **12***That's why I am suffering now.* 2 Timothy 1:11-12a CEV

God's people are hated

[Jesus, to his disciples:] If you belonged to the world, it would love you as it loves its own. But *I have chosen you out of the world, so you don't belong to it. That is why the world hates you.* John 15:19 NCV™

Section B

The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

The Bible speaks of a figure of the end times that is opposed to God and Jesus Christ, and persecutes their people – a final "antichrist". The first "beast" in Revelation is correlated by many with such a figure. However others consider it and the second beast that supports it to represent evil world systems rather than individual persons.

The antichrist will have great authority and be worshiped

He [the beast] *was given ruling authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation,* **8***and all those who live on the earth will worship the beast, everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life* belonging to the Lamb who was killed. Revelation 13:7b-8 NET

This is speaking of the first "beast" of Revelation.

Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *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.* Matthew 24:9 NET

The beast was permitted to go to war against the saints and conquer them. Revelation 13:7a NET

"Three and a half years" is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution

He will speak against the Supreme God and oppress God's people. He will try to change their religious laws and festivals, and *God's people will be under his power for three and a half years.* Daniel 7:25 GNT

> In regard to the duration of the antichrist's rule and the future period of intense persecution of believers, the Bible speaks of periods of time which are equivalent to three and a half years. Whether or not this is literal, such specifications are indicative of the period being predetermined by God. The period will end on Jesus Christ's return, when the two beasts will be thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (cf. Revelation 19:19-20).

Section C
God's Care of Persecuted Believers

God strengthens his people amidst trials

[Paul, to Timothy:] Instead, *take your part in suffering for the Good News, as*

God gives you the strength to do it. 2 Timothy 1:8b GNT

[Christ, to Paul:] *"My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* [Paul:] So then, I will boast most gladly about *my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me.* **10***Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.* 2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 NET

In weakness, hardship and/or persecution (v. 10a), Christ's power was perfected in Paul (v. 9). As such Paul could then say: "I am strong" (v. 10b).

God rescues his people from trials

[God, to Jeremiah:] I will make you as strong as a wall to these people, a fortified wall of bronze. *They will attack you, but they will not be able to overcome you. For I will be with you to rescue you and deliver you," says the LORD.* **21***"I will deliver you from the power of the wicked. I will free you from the clutches of violent people."* Jeremiah 15:20-21 NET

[Paul:] *I endured these persecutions and the Lord delivered me from them all.* 2 Timothy 3:11b NET

God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times

[Daniel, describing a vision:] While I was watching, *that horn began to wage war against the holy ones and was defeating them,* **22***until the Ancient of Days arrived and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High. Then the time came for the holy ones to take possession of the kingdom.* Daniel 7:21-22 NET

The “horn” is understood by many to represent the antichrist.

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Part II

What to Do in Persecution

The Bible provides practical teaching on what to do when faced with persecution. Moreover, the Bible even provides good reasons to rejoice in spite of the suffering often involved in persecution. Not least of these reasons are the blessings that we can experience amidst such hardship – and those that we will receive in the future for enduring it.

Section A

Be Faithful to God and Endure

Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[Jesus Christ, to the church in Pergamum:] 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. … **13** ‘I know where you live – where Satan’s throne is. *Yet you continue to cling to my name and you have not denied your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed in your city where Satan lives.* Revelation 2:10, 13 NET

> The clause “where Satan’s throne is” (v. 13a) apparently refers to the city of Pergamum as a center of pagan worship, no doubt a hostile place to Christians. Note Antipas’s example (v. 13b) of being faithful “even to the point of death” (v. 10b).

Endure persecution

[John:] If anyone is meant for captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, then by the sword he must be killed. *This requires steadfast endurance* and faith from the saints. Revelation 13:10 NET

Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .

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. **3***Think 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

. . . and share in Jesus Christ's sufferings

[Peter, to believers:] But be happy that *you are sharing in Christ's sufferings* so that you will be happy and full of joy when Christ comes again in glory. 1 Peter 4:13 NCV™

It was necessary for Christ to suffer in order to achieve God's objectives for him. Likewise those who are "in" him, must also be prepared to suffer in order to advance his cause. Quite possibly the NT writers had such a concept in mind when they wrote of sharing in Christ's sufferings.

Section B

Have Faith in God and Pray

Have faith and hope in God

[Paul:] For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. **9**Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But *that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead*. **10**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.* 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 ESV

Do not be afraid

[Jesus, to his disciples:] *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

Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say

[Jesus, to his disciples:] You will be brought before governors and kings because of me, to testify to them and to the gentiles. **19**When they hand you over, *don't worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say, because in that hour what you are to say will be given to you.* **20***It won't be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* Matthew 10:18-20 ISV

Pray to God, asking for help

[The early believers:] And *now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your message with great courage,* **30***while you extend your hand to heal, and to bring about miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.* Acts 4:29-30 NET

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

Bless and pray for those who persecute you

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28]*bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you*. Luke 6:27-28 NET

Section C
Rejoice

Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues

[Paul:] Not only this, but *we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,* [4]*and endurance, character, and character, hope*. Romans 5:3-4 NET

My brothers and sisters, *consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials,* [3]*because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* [4]*And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything.* James 1:2-4 NET

Rejoice because of rewards for enduring persecution

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and insult you and reject you as evil on account of the Son of Man! [23]*Rejoice in that day, and jump for joy, because your reward is great in heaven.* For their ancestors did the same things to the prophets. Luke 6:22-23 NET

Section D

Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

Blessings amidst suffering

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy and all comfort. **4***He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us.* **5***We share in the many sufferings of Christ. In the same way, much comfort comes to us through Christ.* 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NCV™

Throughout our lives we are always in danger of death for Jesus' sake, in order that his life may be seen in this mortal body of ours. 2 Corinthians 4:11 GNT

> Jesus' "life" refers to his resurrection life – with its spiritual power for those who share in his suffering, suffering on his behalf.

God's kingdom

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Matthew 5:10 NET

> Note that this teaching probably has a present application as well as a future one.

Eternal life

Happy are those who remain faithful under trials, because when they succeed in passing such a test, they will receive as their reward the life which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12 GNT

Future glory

[Paul, to believers:] And if [we are] children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ) – *if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him.* **18***For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us.* Romans 8:17-18 NET

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C. Joy

D. Wisdom and Knowledge

➜ *All Headings*

19. God's Care of His People

I. God's Saving of His People

A. God's Capacity to Save His People

B. God Saves His People – from All Things

C. God Helps His People against Enemies

II. God's Preservation of His People

A. God Meets His People's Needs

B. God Strengthens His People

C. God Protects His People

➜ *All Headings*

20. God's Plans for His People

I. General

A. God Has Plans for His People

B. God Fulfills His Plans for His People

C. God Works through His People

D. God Guides His People

II. God's Plans for Israel

A. Return to the Land

B. Physical Renewal and Peace

C. Spiritual Renewal

D. A Renewed Relationship with God

E. Glorification

➜ *All Headings*

Unit E

Relating to God

21. Being Right with God

I. Getting Right with God

A. God's Invitation

B. Repentance

C. Belief in Jesus Christ

D. Reasons for Assurance

II. Staying Right with God

A. The Need to Obey God

B. The Need for Good Deeds

C. Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

D. Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ

➜ *All Headings*

22. Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope

A. What Faith Is

B. What to Have Faith For

C. The Importance of Faith

D. Hope in God

II. What Not to Do

A. Do Not Lack Faith

B. Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

C. Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

D. Do Not Worry

E. Do Not Trust in Other Things

➜ *All Headings*

23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

I. Loving and Fearing God

A. Love God

B. The Importance of Loving God

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D. Why God Should Be Feared

E. The Importance of Fearing God

II. Obeying God

A. Obey God

B. How to Obey God

C. Follow Jesus Christ

➜ *All Headings*

24. Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God

A. Seek God

B. Focus on God
C. Meet with God and Live before Him
D. Know God

II. Praying to God

A. The Power of Prayer
B. Praying before God
C. Making Requests
D. God's Response to Requests

➜ *All Headings*

25. Exalting God

I. Instructions

A. Glorify and Honor God
B. Do Not Dishonor God
C. Praise and Thank God
D. How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General
E. How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

II. Reasons to Exalt God

A. Aspects of God's Being
B. Aspects of God's Character
C. What God Does in the World
D. What God Does for His People

➜ *All Headings*

Unit F

Church Life

26. Being One Body

I. General

A. The Church as One Body

B. Be in Unison

C. Be in Fellowship

D. Love Each Other

II. Caring for the Body

A. Pray for Each Other (I): General

B. Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

C. Encourage Each Other

D. Help Each Other

➜ *All Headings*

27. Worshiping God

I. General

A. Worship God

B. Worshiping before God

C. Worshiping Together

II. Offerings

A. Reasons to Give to God
B. What to Give to God
C. How to Give to God
D. Righteousness and Making Offerings

➜ *All Headings*

28. Serving God

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A. Be Prepared to Serve God
B. Be Devoted to God's Work
C. Reasons to Serve God
D. Being Guided by God

II. Doing God's Work

A. Do God's Work – the Best You Can
B. Do the Work through God
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E. Spiritual Gifts

➜ *All Headings*

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C. Circumcision: Its Needlessness

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➜ *All Headings*

30. Church Leadership

I. General

A. Required Characteristics

B. Managing the Church

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B. How to Teach

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➜ *All Headings*

Unit G

Relating to People

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A. Love: Insights

B. Love: Commands

C. Mercy

D. Gentleness

II. Antitheses of Love

A. Selfish Attitudes

B. Ill Feelings

C. Adverse Speech

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➜ *All Headings*

32. Justice

I. Justice in Action

A. Do What Is Just and Right

B. Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

C. Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

II. Being True

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B. Truthfulness
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D. Dishonest Gain

➜ *All Headings*

33. Wisdom

I. Being Wise

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B. Wisdom through God
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D. Wise Speech
E. Wise Personal Practices

II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

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C. Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results
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➜ *All Headings*

34. Common Relationships

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B. Spouses

C. Parents’ Duties to Children
D. Children’s Duties to Parents

II. Civil Relationships

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B. Authorities’ Duties to Citizens
C. Servants and Masters

➜ *All Headings*

35. Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions

A. Tell People the Gospel
B. What Things to Explain
C. How to Spread the Message
D. Supplementary Actions

II. Insights

A. Insights on the Gospel Message
B. The Need to Spread the Gospel
C. God and the Gospel’s Effectiveness

➜ *All Headings*

Unit H

Persevering

36. Standing Firm

I. General

A. Be Faithful to God

B. Remember God and His Word

C. Hold to the Faith

D. Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

II. Spiritual Warfare

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B. Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

C. Counteraction of Demons

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A. Consequences of Sin for God's People

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D. God's Response to Repentance

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➜ *All Headings*

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I. Pride

A. Pride in Thought

B. Pride in Action

C. Outcomes of Pride

D. Antithesis of Pride: Humility

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A. Riches and Godliness

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E. Epilogue: Be Wary

➜ *All Headings*

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I. General

A. Prologue: God’s People Still Have Hard Times

B. Mourn Loss

C. Keep in Mind God and His Word

D. Trust in God

E. Hope in God and Wait for Him

II. Praying in Hard Times

A. Tell God about Your Problems

B. Ask God for Help

C. Praise and Rejoice in God

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➜ *All Headings*

40. Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People

A. The Reality of Persecution

B. The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

C. God's Care of Persecuted Believers

II. What to Do in Persecution

A. Be Faithful to God and Endure

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C. Rejoice

D. Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

➜ *All Headings*

All Headings

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B. God and the World: Basics

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C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. God's Promised Messiah
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All Headings

Chapter 1

God's Being

I. Basics

A. God's Form

- God is one
- God is spirit
- God cannot be seen by people
- God is everywhere

B. God's Glory

- Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God
- God's glory manifests his presence
- In association with his glory, God is surrounded by brilliant light
- God's glory is evidenced by the universe that he has made

C. God's Personhood

- God has a mind – knowing and understanding things
- God has a will
- God has feelings and character
- God communicates
- God interacts with people, responding to their needs

D. God's Eternity

- God has always been alive, the first of all things

- God will live forever
- God transcends time
- God is self-existing
- God does not change

II. God's Pre-Eminence

A. God's Greatness

- God is great and awesome
- God is greater than all others
- There is no one like God
- God is beyond our comprehension

B. God's Power

- God's power is incomparable and unlimited
- God can do all things – nothing is too hard
- God performs awesome deeds

C. God's Knowledge and Wisdom

- God knows everything
- God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do
- God knows people's minds
- God knows the future
- God has incredible wisdom

D. God's Name

- God declared his name to be the "LORD"

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 2

God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics

A. Holiness

- God is holy
- There is nothing bad in God . . .
- . . . God cannot tolerate evil
- God shows himself to be holy by what he does
- There is no one holy like God

B. Righteousness

- God is righteous and just
- All God does is right and just
- God is truthful
- God does not show favoritism

C. Faithfulness

- God is faithful
- God never forsakes nor fails
- God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

D. Anger

- God expresses anger, which has awesome consequences
- God is slow to anger and often holds it back

- God does not stay angry
- God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience

II. Loving Characteristics

A. Love

- God is love – as shown in him giving his only Son, to save us
- God's love is great
- God's love is constant
- God's love lasts forever

B. Mercy

- God is merciful
- God is also compassionate
- Due to his mercy and compassion, God is long-suffering
- Due to his mercy and compassion, God is forgiving

C. Goodness

- God is good
- God exercises kindness
- God is generous

D. Jealousy

- God is a jealous God
- God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin
- God is also jealous for his people's well-being

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 3

Jesus Christ

I. General

A. Jesus Christ's Eternity

- Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ was before all things
- Jesus Christ will be alive forever
- Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is "the life"
- Jesus Christ remains the same

B. Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence

- Jesus Christ is greater than all things
- Jesus Christ has divine glory
- Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power
- Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom
- Jesus Christ is everywhere

C. Jesus Christ's Character

- Jesus Christ is holy and righteous
- Jesus Christ is faithful
- Jesus Christ is loving

D. Jesus Christ's Name

- Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself

II. Jesus Christ and God

A. Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is God's only Son
- Jesus Christ is the image of God
- Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God

B. Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

- God testified to Jesus Christ being his Son
- Others also testified to Jesus Christ being the Son of God
- Jesus Christ's deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God
- Other events of Jesus Christ's incarnation are further evidence

C. Jesus Christ Is Identified with God

- Jesus Christ and the Father are one
- To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father
- Jesus Christ is called "God"
- Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ

D. Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

- Jesus Christ is worshiped
- People pray to Jesus Christ
- People obey and serve Jesus Christ

E. Jesus Christ Is Under God's Authority

- God is both Jesus Christ's God and his Father
- Jesus Christ is described as being subordinate to God
- Jesus Christ is God's servant

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 4

The Holy Spirit

I. General

A. The Holy Spirit of God

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .
- . . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence
- God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

B. The Holy Spirit's Being

- As well as being a spirit, the Holy Spirit is everywhere
- The Holy Spirit is eternal
- The Holy Spirit has great power
- The Holy Spirit has great knowledge
- The Holy Spirit has great wisdom

C. The Holy Spirit's Personhood

- The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit has his own mind
- The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics
- The Holy Spirit communicates . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

A. Mutual Association

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are closely associated
- The Holy Spirit is identified with God
- The Holy Spirit is also identified with Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ
- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together

B. Mutual Divine Attributes

- Omnipresence – God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere
- Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power
- Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge

C. Mutual Divine Roles

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation
- They each give spiritual or eternal life
- They each make God's people holy

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 5

Angels, Satan and Demons

I. Angels

A. Attributes of Angels

- Angels have a human-like form, but are very awesome
- Angels are very powerful
- Angels can communicate and interact with others

B. Angels and God

- Angels surround God, and even stand in his presence
- Angels worship God and Jesus Christ
- Angels serve God and Jesus Christ

C. Angels and God's People

- Angels help and care for God's people
- Angels give people messages, including instructions . . .
- . . . Angels also give messages about future events

II. Satan and Demons

A. Satan's Evilness

- Satan is evil and is opposed to God's kingdom
- Satan is deceitful

B. Satan's Power

- Satan has great power and authority in the world
- Satan works in and through unbelievers
- Satan is not as powerful as God
- Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ
- Satan stands condemned

C. Satan's Work against God's People

- Satan tempts God's people
- Satan can afflict God's people
- Satan's influence is limited by God and Jesus Christ

D. Demons

- Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings
- Demons are aligned with Satan
- Demons can possess people . . .
- . . . and demons can cause such people much harm
- Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ
- Demons face eternal punishment

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 6

God's Creation

I. General

A. God Made All Things

- God made the heavens and earth – and everything in them
- All that God made is very good

B. God Maintains Creation

- Every creature's life is dependent on God
- God provides food for all creatures
- God regulates all aspects of the weather
- God maintains nature

C. How God Made and Maintains Creation

- God made all things with his wisdom
- God made all things with his power
- God made all things by his word
- God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit also has a role in creation

D. Implications of God Being Creator

- Because he made everything, all things belong to God
- Because he made everything, God is sovereign over all things
- Creation shows God's power and wisdom to be incomparable

II. God's Creation of People

A. Life and Death

- God creates people . . .
- . . . God gives people life and breath
- People's lives are very brief
- Each person is destined to die

B. The Human Spirit

- God has made people with a spirit
- The spirit is at the core of one's being
- People are dead without their spirit
- People's spirits exist after death

C. The Uniqueness of People

- God has made people in his own image
- God has given people an able mind – with which they can think and reason intelligently
- People have the moral capacity to know good from evil
- People are to care for and act responsibly towards creation

D. Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

- God reveals himself to people
- God reveals himself by what he does
- Creation perpetually evidences and reveals God to all people

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 7

God's Sovereignty

I. God's Supreme Authority

A. The LORD Is God – the Only God

- The LORD is God
- The LORD is God of all people
- The LORD is the one and only God
- His deeds show that he is the only God

B. God Reigns Supreme

- God rules over all
- God rules over all authorities
- God rules over the earth in righteousness
- God will reign forever
- God will impose his absolute rule on all

C. God Defeats His Enemies

- No one can effectively oppose God
- God destroys his enemies

D. God Fulfills His Plans

- God carries out his plans
- God does not change his plans
- No one can thwart God's plans

- God works everything for his plans

II. God's Control over the World

A. God Has Control over Evil

- God exerts control over evil
- God even uses evil to fulfill his purposes

B. God Has Control over Nature

- God directs nature
- God can perform miracles of nature

C. God Has Control over the Nations

- God is in control of the nations
- God has been in control of the nations throughout history
- God establishes all ruling authorities

D. God Has Control over Each Person

- God has control over people's hearts and minds
- God has control over people's actions . . .
- . . . Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God
- God controls all that happens to people

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 8

God's Word

I. General

A. What God's Word Comprises

- God's word primarily is Scripture
- God's word includes his laws
- God's word includes his covenants
- God's word includes his prophecies
- God's word also includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people
- Jesus Christ is "the Word of God"
- Note: God has given his word by the Holy Spirit

B. Characteristics of God's Word

- God's word is holy, righteous and good
- God's word is true . . .
- . . . and what God's word foretells comes true
- God's word is living and active
- God's word is powerful
- God's word is everlasting

C. Functions of God's Word

- God's word brings spiritual and eternal life
- God's word gives light

- God's word gives hope
- God's word gives joy

II. Key Old Testament Covenants

A. God's Covenant with Abraham

- God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him: countless descendants; the land of Canaan; . . .
- . . . and that all peoples would be blessed through Abraham
- Abraham believed God, and was accredited with righteousness

B. God's Covenant with Israel and the Law

- God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law
- If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God
- Laws for the people's relationship with God
- Laws for relationships with other people
- By obeying all the law, the Israelites would have righteousness

C. God's Dealings and Covenant with David

- David was chosen by God, as ruler over Israel
- David reigned over Israel, as a powerful and righteous king – undergirded by God
- God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 9

The Problem of Sin

I. General

A. What Sin Is

- Sin is breaking God's law
- All wrongdoing is sin
- Not doing what we should do is sin

B. Sin Is against God

- Sin is action against God
- Sin is rebellion against God
- Thus, sin is hated by God

C. Sin Is Universal

- All people have sinned . . .
- . . . No one is righteous before God
- People in fact have a sinful nature

D. Sin Has Intrinsic Ill Effects

- Sin brings spiritual defilement
- Sin results in separation from God
- Sin brings spiritual death
- Sin also brings enslavement to sin

E. Sin Brings God's Anger and Death

- Sin makes one subject to God's anger
- Sin results in physical death
- Sin brings the prospect of eternal "death"

II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

A. Offerings for Atonement for Sinners

- An animal was offered to make atonement for one who sinned
- Animals brought as offerings were to be without defect
- The sinner laid hands on the offering, signifying it as a substitute

B. The Blood of the Offerings

- The blood of the offerings for sin featured in making atonement
- For the life of a creature is in its blood

C. The Role of the Priests

- God designated Aaron and his descendants as priests
- The priests made the offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them
- The high priest made atonement yearly for Israel as a whole

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 10

God's Judgment

I. Basics

A. God Is the Judge of the World

- God is judge – of the whole earth
- God makes judgments in the world
- God makes himself known by his judgment

B. Reasons for God's Judgment

- God's judgment is to punish sin and unfaithfulness
- God's judgment is to discipline God's people
- God's judgment is to punish the wicked
- God's judgment is also to reward God's people

C. God's Judgment Is Just

- God judges righteously and justly
- God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds
- God takes into account thoughts and motives
- God judges and repays people according to what they do
- God gives fair warning, allowing for judgment to be avoided

II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

A. Means of God's Judicial Retribution

- Angels
- Nature
- Nations

B. Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

- Awesome power
- Inescapable
- Terrifying
- Horrific consequences

C. The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

- Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment on the wicked
- The situation of the wicked is precarious
- In due time God does take action against the wicked
- The wicked reap what they sow, brought down by their own evil
- The future of the wicked contrasts with that of the righteous

D. God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

- Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant
- Eventually God decided to destroy unfaithful Israel
- But God promised to spare a remnant of Israel

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 11

God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity

A. The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

- The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God
- The anointed one would have God's Spirit on him
- The Scriptures speak of the coming of a great ruler of Israel
- The ruler would bring salvation to the nations
- The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David

B. Prophecy of the Messiah's Death for Sins

- The OT Scriptures say the Messiah would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted

C. Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

- Jesus Christ is the one chosen by God
- Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Jesus is the Messiah
- The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ
- For the OT Scriptures speak of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .
- . . . and they speak of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ

D. Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

- Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ
- People acknowledged him as the Christ
- Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God

II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

A. Jesus Christ's Mission from God

- God sent Jesus Christ into the world
- God sent Jesus Christ to take away sins
- God sent Jesus Christ to save the world
- Jesus came to bring truth
- Jesus came to enable us to know God

B. Jesus Christ's Humanity

- Jesus Christ became a human being
- Jesus was born – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit
- Jesus was a descendant of David
- Jesus' humanity was vital to his mission to save people

C. Jesus Christ's Personality

- Jesus was loving
- Jesus was compassionate
- Jesus was gentle and humble
- Jesus was righteous

D. Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

- God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things

everywhere

- God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 12

Jesus Christ's Mission

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

A. Jesus Christ's Power from God

- God granted Jesus sovereign authority
- God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission
- The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did
- Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power

B. Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

- God taught Jesus
- Jesus knew everything
- Jesus was also filled with wisdom
- Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom

C. Jesus Christ's Direction from God

- God worked through Jesus . . .
- . . . Jesus only did what God did
- Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him

II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

A. Jesus Christ's Miracles

- Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people

- Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders
- Jesus even raised the dead
- Jesus exercised control over nature, in helping people

B. Jesus Christ's Teaching

- Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God
- Jesus' teaching was from God
- Jesus' teaching was amazing – leading people to believe in him

C. Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

- Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him
- The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent
- The horrific suffering and death of Jesus
- It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone

D. Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

- God raised Jesus from the dead
- Jesus' body was not found in his tomb
- Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection
- Jesus was taken up to God in heaven
- Because he suffered death, God gave Jesus Christ great glory

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 13

Salvation through Jesus Christ

I. Salvation from Sin

A. Jesus Christ's Sacrifice for Us

- Jesus gave himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins
- So, Jesus Christ died for us

B. Atonement for Sin

- Jesus Christ's sacrifice means that our sins can be forgiven . . .
- . . . and that we can therefore be righteous before God
- Consequently, through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .
- . . . and so through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God
- Thus, Jesus Christ was the atoning sacrifice for sins, saving people from God's wrath

C. Redemption from Sin

- Jesus gave himself as a ransom for us, to free us from sin
- Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control
- God's people have been bought by Jesus Christ's death
- As such, they are free from sin and are now slaves to God

D. Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

- Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in us being saved

- Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection

II. Salvation for the World

A. The Savior of the World

- God provides salvation through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world
- We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

B. Life through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ brings spiritual life
- Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life rather than death

C. Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ died for all people
- God has made the way of faith in Jesus open also to Gentiles
- Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one
- Those who believe are the true, spiritual children of Abraham

D. Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

- Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel
- The Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ
- So, God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles
- God has left a faithful remnant of Israel

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 14

The New Order

I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

A. Righteousness by Faith and Grace

- The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection
- We are not made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ
- We are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law
- We are saved by God's grace rather than by works

B. Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards
- Through Christ believers have been released from the law
- With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin
- Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace

C. The Relevance of the Law

- The main purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin
- The law's spiritual and moral commands are still to be obeyed

II. Key Elements of the New Order

A. God's New Covenant

- The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the new covenant – through Christ
- Under the new covenant, God's people: have God's laws in them; know him; and are forgiven

B. Jesus Christ as High Priest

- Jesus Christ is the high priest of God's people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary
- Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all
- Jesus Christ intercedes for God's people

C. The Kingdom of God

- The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission
- The kingdom of God is spiritual in its nature
- The kingdom of God is dynamic

D. Jesus Christ as Lord of All

- God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all
- God has given Jesus Christ power over all things
- In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 15

‘The Last Things’

I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Judgment

A. The Timing of Jesus Christ’s Return

- Jesus Christ will return at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual
- Jesus Christ’s return will be preceded by distressful events
- Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Christ’s return

B. Jesus Christ’s Return

- Jesus Christ will return with his angels
- Jesus Christ will come in great glory
- On Jesus Christ’s return his followers will be gathered to him
- On Jesus Christ’s return evil powers will be crushed

C. The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

- God will judge every person, for all they have done
- The dead will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned

D. The Final Judgment (II): The Process

- God will judge all people through Jesus Christ
- On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done

- Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will have eternal life
- Those who have rejected Jesus Christ will be condemned
- What people have known will be taken into account

E. The Millennium

- The prophecy of a thousand year reign of Jesus Christ

II. The Afterlife

A. The New Creation

- The present heavens and earth will pass away
- God will create new heavens and a new earth
- God's people will live in the new Jerusalem

B. Eternal Life

- As God raised Christ from the dead, God will raise his people
- On Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ
- God's people will be given eternal life

C. The Heavenly State of God's People

- God's people will enter the kingdom of God
- God's people will be made perfect
- God's people will have glory
- There will be no more sorrow and no more death

D. Being with God

- God's people will be with God and Jesus Christ forever
- God's people will see God

- God’s people will praise God
- God’s people will serve God

E. The Punishment for the Ungodly

- The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ
- The ungodly will be thrown into fire

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 16

The Standing of God's People

I. Basics

A. Prologue: God Draws People to Himself

- God chooses people (to be his people)
- God moves people to believe and turn to Jesus Christ

B. God's People Belong to God

- God's people belong to him
- They are God's people . . .
- . . . and God is their God
- God's people likewise belong to Jesus Christ

C. God's People Are His Family

- Each believer belongs to the family of God
- God is their Father
- They are God's children
- As God's children, they are also heirs of God

D. God's People Are His Church

- God's people form his church
- The church is God's temple, in which God dwells by his Spirit
- Jesus Christ is the ruler of God's church

II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ

A. God’s People Are ‘in’ Jesus Christ

- God’s people are “in” Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ identifies himself with God’s people
- God’s people live with Jesus Christ

B. The Significance of Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ

- “In” Jesus Christ God’s people are redeemed and forgiven
- “In” Jesus Christ God’s people have righteousness
- “In” Jesus Christ believers are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life

C. God’s People Are One Body ‘in’ Jesus Christ

- All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body “in” Jesus Christ
- The church is the body of Christ
- Jesus Christ is the head of the body

D. Epilogue: God’s People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ’s death and priesthood have opened the way into God’s presence for God’s people
- God’s people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 17

Keys to God's Interaction

I. Basics

A. God Is Always with His People

- God and Jesus Christ are always with their people
- God is with his people wherever they go . . .
- . . . God also goes before his people
- God is with his people in trouble – and sees them through it

B. God Knows His People

- God and Jesus Christ know their people
- God and Jesus know all their people's needs and troubles

C. God Loves and Is Faithful to His People

- God loves his people greatly
- God's love is with his people always
- God is faithful to his people
- God faithfully keeps his promises to his people

D. God Shows Grace to His People

- God shows much grace towards his people
- By grace God's people are given spiritual blessings
- By grace God's people are strengthened

II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

A. God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People

- God gives his people his Holy Spirit, to live in them
- Having the Holy Spirit shows a person is one of God's people . . .
- . . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person
- The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come

B. God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit

- God saves his people through the Holy Spirit
- God teaches his people through the Holy Spirit
- God works through his people by the Holy Spirit

C. The Holy Spirit Renews God's People

- The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life
- The Holy Spirit makes God's people holy
- The Holy Spirit produces spiritual "fruit" in God's people

D. The Holy Spirit Helps God's People

- The Holy Spirit helps each believer
- The Holy Spirit leads God's people
- The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit has a key role in what God's people say

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 18

God's Transformation of His People

I. General

A. God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

- God's people are given spiritual life
- In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have "died" and they are now spiritually alive
- God's people are spiritually reborn of God
- God's people are a new creation

B. God Makes His People Holy

- God makes his people holy
- God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus' sacrifice
- God's people are in fact being transformed to be like Jesus

C. God Teaches His People

- God teaches his people how to live
- God enables his people to know the truth

D. God Disciplines His People

- God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves
- God's discipline is done in righteousness and faithfulness
- God's discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through

II. Spiritual Attributes

A. Love, Faith and Hope

- God and Jesus Christ give their people love and faith . . .
- . . . God teaches his people to love
- God gives his people hope by what he has done through Christ
- God's promises give his people hope

B. Peace

- God gives his people peace . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ gives his people peace
- It is a great peace

C. Joy

- God and Jesus Christ give joy to their people
- It is an enduring joy
- The joy is present even in trouble

D. Wisdom and Knowledge

- God gives his people wisdom and knowledge
- God's people are given spiritual sight

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 19

God's Care of His People

I. God's Saving of His People

A. God's Capacity to Save His People

- God is able to save his people – no matter what the odds
- God has mighty power to save his people
- God does not need to use any other means but himself

B. God Saves His People – from All Things

- God is the Savior of his people
- God saves his people out of all troubles
- God sets his people free from things that imprison
- God's saving of his people makes known that he is the only God

C. God Helps His People against Enemies

- God consistently helps his people
- God helps his people by delivering them from enemies
- For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies
- God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world
- God's people are enabled to overcome Satan

II. God's Preservation of His People

A. God Meets His People's Needs

- God cares for his people
- God meets his people's physical needs even in harsh situations
- God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst
- God provides for all their needs – they will not lack anything

B. God Strengthens His People

- God strengthens his people when they are weak
- God strengthens his people in the face of adversity
- God strengthens them spiritually, until Christ's return

C. God Protects His People

- God protects his people
- God is a refuge for his people
- God guards his people
- God protects his people from all evil – including Satan
- God will protect his people until the end

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 20

God's Plans for His People

I. General

A. God Has Plans for His People

- God has plans and purposes for his people
- These plans include work for God's people to do
- God's plans are not dependent upon his people's backgrounds

B. God Fulfills His Plans for His People

- In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them
- God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people

C. God Works through His People

- God moves his people to do his work
- God equips his people for the work
- God helps and empowers them to do his work even if they feel inadequate
- God's power for his people is great

D. God Guides His People

- God guides his people always
- God guides his people in difficult circumstances

- God guides his people in doing his work

II. God's Plans for Israel

A. Return to the Land

- God will return home the remnant of exiled Israel
- The people of Israel will possess the land forever

B. Physical Renewal and Peace

- Israel will be physically restored
- Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel
- The Messiah will rule Israel forever in righteousness and peace
- Israel will have lasting peace

C. Spiritual Renewal

- God will cleanse Israel of sin
- The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit

D. A Renewed Relationship with God

- God will be Israel's God and they will be his people
- God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever
- The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God

E. Glorification

- God will glorify Israel
- Israel's renewal will display God's glory

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 21

Being Right with God

I. Getting Right with God

A. God's Invitation

- God invites all people to come to him and be saved
- God wants us to earnestly seek him
- We must believe in God and what he says
- We need to be open to believing and responding

B. Repentance

- We must repent
- Confess your sins . . .
- . . . Turn from sin and do what is right
- Turn to God in repentance
- Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins

C. Belief in Jesus Christ

- Believe in Jesus Christ
- Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
- Belief in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness of sins
- Belief in Jesus Christ makes one righteous before God
- Belief in Jesus Christ brings eternal life

D. Reasons for Assurance

- Having the Holy Spirit
- Obedience to God
- Love for other Christians
- Further reasons

II. Staying Right with God

A. The Need to Obey God

- We need to obey God as well as believe
- Obedience is critical for holiness and eternal life

B. The Need for Good Deeds

- True faith involves good deeds
- Good deeds accompany salvation
- But our deeds do not earn salvation, for it is by grace

C. Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

- We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit
- Inner righteousness is needed, not just compliance with rules

D. Epilogue: Living ‘in’ Jesus Christ

- Live “in” Jesus Christ by faith
- Live “in” Jesus Christ by holding to his teachings

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 22

Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope

A. What Faith Is

- Faith involves believing in God
- We must also trust in God

B. What to Have Faith For

- Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises
- Have faith that God will care for you
- Have faith that God will do what you ask

C. The Importance of Faith

- By faith we stand firm
- Faith produces obedience to God
- Faith produces work in service to God
- Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests
- If we have faith nothing will be impossible

D. Hope in God

- Set your hope on God's care
- Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow
- Hope is vital for faith

II. What Not to Do

A. Do Not Lack Faith

- Do not be lacking in faith
- Do not doubt

B. Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

- Do not be afraid – trust in God
- Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous

C. Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

- God is far more powerful than our enemies
- God is always with his people
- God helps his people

D. Do Not Worry

- Do not worry – trust God with your concerns
- Do not worry about the cares of this life, for God will provide

E. Do Not Trust in Other Things

- Do not trust in other people, but rather trust in God
- Do not trust in yourself
- Do not trust in riches

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 23

Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

I. Loving and Fearing God

A. Love God

- Love God and Jesus Christ
- Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them
- Love for God is linked with loving other Christians

B. The Importance of Loving God

- Loving God is of the utmost importance
- God and Jesus Christ love those who love them

C. Fear God

- Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him
- Do not fear anything but God
- God’s people should not live in fear of his punishment

D. Why God Should Be Feared

- God’s surpassing greatness and sovereignty
- God’s anger and judgment
- God’s holiness

E. The Importance of Fearing God

- Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him . . .

- . . . Fearing God compels one to avoid sin
- Fear of God leads to life
- Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom

II. Obeying God

A. Obey God

- Obey God always – forever
- We should obey God because of what he has done for us
- We should obey God because he is our God . . .
- . . . It is no good expressing commitment without obeying

B. How to Obey God

- Persistently read God's commands
- Do what you learn of God's law and word
- Ask God to help you follow his commands
- Submit yourself to God
- Obey God wholeheartedly
- Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult

C. Follow Jesus Christ

- Follow Jesus Christ
- Be a disciple of Jesus Christ
- Follow Jesus Christ's example
- Make Jesus Christ your Lord

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 24

Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God

A. Seek God

- Seek God wholeheartedly
- If you seek God wholeheartedly, you will find him
- Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him
- Seeking God brings great blessings

B. Focus on God

- Keep thinking about God
- Keep thinking about what God has done

C. Meet with God and Live before Him

- Come before God, meeting with him
- Live before God . . .
- . . . “Walk” with God

D. Know God

- Know God and Jesus Christ
- Knowing God is linked to obeying his commands
- Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others
- Knowing God is vital for understanding

II. Praying to God

A. The Power of Prayer

- Prayer is very powerful
- If we ask God for things, he will give them (or do them)

B. Praying before God

- Pray before God, in his presence
- Pray to God as a caring father
- Pray in the Holy Spirit
- Be reverent when praying

C. Making Requests

- Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"
- Ask earnestly and persistently
- Do not doubt but believe that what you ask will be granted
- Give thanks when asking

D. God's Response to Requests

- God answers those who obey and please him
- God grants anything we ask that is in accordance with his will

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 25

Exalting God

I. Instructions

A. Glorify and Honor God

- Give glory to God
- Honor God
- Glorify and honor God by praise and thanksgiving
- Glorify and honor God by how you live

B. Do Not Dishonor God

- Do not dishonor God by your actions
- Do not blaspheme God
- Do not treat God with contempt

C. Praise and Thank God

- Praise God constantly
- Give thanks to God always

D. How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General

- In righteousness
- Wholeheartedly
- Through prayer
- Through singing

E. How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

- Rejoice when giving praise and thanks to God
- Rejoice in God always

II. Reasons to Exalt God

A. Aspects of God's Being

- God's glory
- God's greatness
- God's power
- God's wisdom and knowledge

B. Aspects of God's Character

- God's holiness
- God's love and faithfulness
- God's mercy

C. What God Does in the World

- God's creative work
- God's provision of water and food
- God's reign
- God's word

D. What God Does for His People

- God's salvation through Christ and the associated blessings . . .
- . . . in which one should rejoice
- God's deliverance from difficulties . . .
- . . . in which one should rejoice

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 26

Being One Body

I. General

A. The Church as One Body

- Church members form one body – the body of Christ
- Being one body, church members meet together
- Church members function together as one church body

B. Be in Unison

- Be united as one
- Be at peace with each other
- Submit to one another
- Avoid foolish arguments and quarreling

C. Be in Fellowship

- Have fellowship together – and with the Father and Jesus Christ
- Participate together in church activities
- Share together in the sufferings that come because of Christ
- Share in each other's joy and troubles

D. Love Each Other

- Love each other as Christ loved us, even laying down his life
- Loving other Christians is indicative of being of Christ and God
- Love is expressed with actions

II. Caring for the Body

A. Pray for Each Other (I): General

- Pray constantly for each other
- Pray for those facing persecution
- Pray for those spreading the gospel

B. Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

- Ask that other believers will live as God wants
- Pray for their spiritual growth and perfection
- Ask God to help and take care of them

C. Encourage Each Other

- Encourage each other
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say
- Encourage others to remain true to the Lord
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you do

D. Help Each Other

- Be concerned for and compassionate towards each other
- Consequently, help each other
- Share what you have with those in need

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 27

Worshiping God

I. General

A. Worship God

- Worship God alone
- Worship God for his glory and sovereignty
- Worship God for his great deeds
- Worship God for his creation of everything
- Worship God because of his care of his people

B. Worshiping before God

- Worship God in spirit
- Worship God in reverence and awe
- Worship God with praise

C. Worshiping Together

- Join with fellow believers in worshiping God
- Offer praise and thanksgiving together
- Pray together

II. Offerings

A. Reasons to Give to God

- Offerings are an important part of worshiping God

- Offerings acknowledge God's provision for us
- Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance
- Offerings support the service of God

B. What to Give to God

- Give the "firstfruits" to God
- Give the best to God . . .
- . . . Do not give what is inferior to God
- Give all that you can
- Offer spiritual sacrifices

C. How to Give to God

- Give willingly
- Give generously
- Give regularly

D. Righteousness and Making Offerings

- We must live righteously to acceptably worship God
- Our offerings are not acceptable if our lives do not please God
- We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 28

Serving God

I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

A. Be Prepared to Serve God

- Be prepared and ready to do God’s work
- Being prepared for God’s work requires godly living

B. Be Devoted to God’s Work

- Serve only God
- Devote yourself to God’s work
- Dedicate your life to living for God and Jesus Christ

C. Reasons to Serve God

- God is our God, who has done great things for us
- Your work for God will be productive
- You will be rewarded for your work
- Whoever does not produce “fruit” will be cut off from Christ

D. Being Guided by God

- To be guided by God, live a godly life
- Ask God to guide you (as in troubled times)

II. Doing God’s Work

A. Do God's Work – the Best You Can

- Do the work assigned to you
- Work hard at God's work
- Do quality work which bears "fruit" – "fruit" that will last

B. Do the Work through God

- Apart from God and Jesus Christ, we can accomplish nothing
- Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray
- Do God's work with his help
- Serve God through the Holy Spirit

C. The Manner in Which to Serve God

- Serve God in holiness and righteousness
- Serve God wholeheartedly
- Be strong and courageous

D. Working with Other Believers

- Serve each other
- Do God's work together
- Encourage each other in doing God's work

E. Spiritual Gifts

- God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Spirit
- Use your spiritual gift to build up the church

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 29

Significant Practices

I. Symbolic Rites

A. Baptism

- God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ
- Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications
- Baptism signifies belief
- Baptism signifies the washing away of sins

B. The Lord's Supper

- Observe the Lord's Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death
- Participating in the Lord's Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ

C. Circumcision: Its Needlessness

- Circumcision does not bring salvation
- Circumcision is of no consequence for believers
- It is our hearts that should be circumcised

II. Other Significant Practices

A. Confession of Jesus Christ

- Confess Jesus Christ, before others

- Things to confess about Jesus Christ

B. Keeping the Sabbath Holy

- Observe the Sabbath as holy by resting on it
- Observing the Sabbath enables people to be refreshed
- It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath
- Verses that might suggest we do not need to keep the Sabbath

C. Fasting

- Fasting can be done regularly, with worship and prayer
- Fasting can be done on particular occasions, in petitioning God

D. The Laying on of Hands

- In conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit
- In conveying blessing
- In commissioning for ministry

➜ *Major Headings*

All Headings

Chapter 30

Church Leadership

I. General

A. Required Characteristics

- Godliness
- Wisdom
- Strength and courage
- Deep love for church members

B. Managing the Church

- As a leader, provide good leadership
- Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority
- Be an example for others to follow

C. Caring for Church Members

- Be a shepherd taking care of God’s flock
- Pray for church members
- Strengthen members in the faith
- Work hard at helping church members
- Confront church members over sin

D. Church Members’ Duties to Leaders

- Love your leaders
- Obey your leaders

- Give your leaders material support

II. Teaching in the Church

A. What to Teach: God's Word

- Teach and preach God's word
- Teach God's commands and ways
- Teach the truths of the faith
- Read God's word in church worship

B. How to Teach

- Explain God's word and truths
- The manner in which to teach

C. False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

- False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, while claiming God's authority
- They say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things
- False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ

D. False Teachers (II): Guarding against Them

- Watch out for false teachers and their teaching – so as not to be deceived
- Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures
- False teachers can be recognized by their "fruit"

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 31

Love

I. Loving Qualities

A. Love: Insights

- What love is
- The supremacy of love

B. Love: Commands

- Live a life of love . . .
- . . . Do all things in love
- Love others as you love yourself . . .
- . . . “Love your neighbor as yourself” sums up God’s law
- Love your enemies and do good to them

C. Mercy

- Show mercy
- Be merciful and God will show you mercy
- Forgive others and God will forgive you
- Do not judge others, or God will judge you accordingly
- Be generous and share with others

D. Gentleness

- Be humble, gentle and patient
- Be meek

- Seek peace, including peace with others

II. Antitheses of Love

A. Selfish Attitudes

- Do not pursue selfish ends
- Do not be greedy
- Do not covet
- Seek the interests of others before your own . . .
- . . . Do so even at great cost to yourself, as Jesus Christ did

B. Ill Feelings

- Control and avoid anger
- Do not hate
- Get rid of any bitterness or malice
- Do not be jealous

C. Adverse Speech

- Do not quarrel
- Do not slander
- Do not gossip
- Do not grumble against others

D. Adverse Force

- Do not use violence
- Do not murder
- Do not rape
- Do not oppress

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 32

Justice

I. Justice in Action

A. Do What Is Just and Right

- Act justly
- In acting justly, do what is right
- Maintain justice
- Do not show favoritism

B. Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

- Do not mistreat the needy
- Defend the cause of the needy
- Provide the needy with food and clothing
- Even sell your possessions so as to give to the poor
- Treat foreigners the same as your native-born

C. Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

- Defending and providing for the needy are part of true religion
- Providing for the needy brings oneself blessing
- God will punish those who ignore the needy

II. Being True

A. Faithfulness

- Be faithful
- Be trustworthy
- Stand by others

B. Truthfulness

- Speak the truth
- Be honest
- Be sincere
- Have integrity

C. Deceitfulness

- Do not deceive
- Do not lie
- Do not give false testimony
- Do not use flattery
- Do not plot evil schemes

D. Dishonest Gain

- Do not steal
- Do not defraud
- Do not take excessive interest or extort money
- Do not accept bribes

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 33

Wisdom

I. Being Wise

A. The Precedence of Godly Wisdom

- Godly wisdom is superior to anything else
- Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God
- Worldly wisdom is ultimately futile, even detrimental

B. Wisdom through God

- Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom
- Ask God for wisdom . . .
- . . . For it is God who gives wisdom
- Obeying God's commands brings wisdom
- Wisdom involves doing what is right – and avoiding evil

C. Wisdom through Others

- Pay attention to instruction
- Heed discipline and correction

D. Wise Speech

- Be quick to listen and slow to speak
- Use few words
- Speak graciously
- Remember that our words are determined by our "heart"

E. Wise Personal Practices

- Be self-controlled
- Do not act in haste
- Work hard
- Enjoy life and be happy

II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

A. Foolishness

- Fools spurn and lack wisdom
- Foolishness involves disobedience to God
- Foolishness encompasses doing wrong

B. Foolish Practices

- Being quick-tempered is foolish
- Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble
- Indulging in pleasure is foolish and pointless
- Further notably foolish practices

C. Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results

- Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin
- Spiritual ignorance is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded

D. Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked

- The ungodly do not know God or Jesus Christ
- The ungodly do not comprehend God’s word
- The ungodly are ignorant of and deceived about their sin

- The ungodly are largely oblivious of God's pending punishment – which they will bear

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 34

Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships

A. Prologue: Issues regarding Getting Married

- Unmarried people can be fully devoted to the Lord
- Do not marry outside of God's people
- A person should have only one spouse
- Remarriage and adultery

B. Spouses

- A husband and wife should be as one
- Husbands should love their wives
- Wives should submit to their husbands
- Do not commit adultery
- Avoid divorce

C. Parents' Duties to Children

- Parents should love their children
- Parents should care for their children
- Parents should discipline their children
- Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to trust and obey God

D. Children's Duties to Parents

- Children are to honor their parents
- Children are to obey their parents
- Children should heed their parents' teaching
- Children are to help their parents

II. Civil Relationships

A. Citizens' Duties to Authorities

- Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities
- For authorities are established by God and punish wrongdoers
- But citizens should defy commands that conflict with God's will

B. Authorities' Duties to Citizens

- Authorities should act and rule according to God's ways
- Authorities should rule as servants of God and their people
- Authorities should rule wisely
- Authorities should rule justly
- Authorities should defend the needy

C. Servants and Masters

- Servants should be obedient, submissive and respectful
- Servants should be trustworthy and faithful
- Masters must treat servants justly
- Masters must not withhold servants' wages

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 35

Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions

A. Tell People the Gospel

- Tell people the gospel message about Jesus Christ
- Tell all people, everywhere
- Do not be ashamed of the gospel

B. What Things to Explain

- Explain who Jesus Christ is
- Tell people about Jesus' death and resurrection . . .
- . . . and tell people about the results
- Tell people about the kingdom of God
- Tell people about what God is like and what he has done . . .
- . . . and tell what God has done for you
- Tell people how they should respond

C. How to Spread the Message

- Present the gospel accurately and plainly
- Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit
- Spread the gospel boldly – with God's help
- Work hard at spreading the gospel message

D. Supplementary Actions

- Pray for your proclamation of the gospel . . .
- . . . and pray for others who proclaim the gospel
- Pray for the salvation of unbelievers
- Act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel
- Act in a way that is consistent with the gospel

II. Insights

A. Insights on the Gospel Message

- The gospel is not made up by men – it is true
- The gospel reveals God's secret plan concerning Jesus Christ
- The gospel is good news

B. The Need to Spread the Gospel

- We are responsible for telling others the gospel
- Through believers spreading the gospel others come to believe
- There are many people ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them
- The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it

C. God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

- The gospel is the power of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world
- The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power
- The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief
- God and Jesus at times confirm the gospel message by miracles

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 36

Standing Firm

I. General

A. Be Faithful to God

- Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ
- Serve God faithfully
- Do not be unfaithful to God by not obeying him

B. Remember God and His Word

- Ensure you remember God
- Remember what God has done
- Remember God’s word and commands
- Persistently meditate on God’s word and commands

C. Hold to the Faith

- Continue to live by Christian teaching
- Grow in your knowledge of God
- Stand firm until the end . . .
- . . . Persist so that you will receive the reward

D. Be Ready for Jesus Christ’s Return

- As you do not know when Jesus Christ will come, keep watch and be ready
- Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ’s return will be only

after certain events – and obvious to all

II. Spiritual Warfare

A. The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

- Believers have spiritual enemies, notably Satan
- Believers have human enemies
- Believers face internal spiritual conflict
- But God and Jesus enable Christians to overcome

B. Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

- Resist Satan
- Use spiritual weapons and armor
- Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .
- . . . God's word; . . .
- . . . and prayer

C. Counteraction of Demons

- Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons
- Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ's "name"
- The Holy Spirit and prayer also figure in driving out demons

D. Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

- Avoid witchcraft and other occult practices
- Do not consult anyone who performs occult practices
- Do not have other "gods" or idols

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 37

Rejecting Sin

I. Encountering Sin

A. Consequences of Sin for God's People

- Sin deprives God's people of his blessings
- God may punish sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish
- Sin defiles God's people – making them spiritually unclean
- God turns away from those who persist in sin

B. Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God

- Stop sinning
- Return to God with all your heart
- In returning from sin to God, do what God wants

C. Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God

- Confess your sin to God
- Be sorrowful over your sin
- Humble yourself before God over your sin
- Ask God for forgiveness and restoration

D. God's Response to Repentance

- God forgives our sins
- God restores our relationship with him

II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

A. Avoiding Sin

- Take care in avoiding sin
- Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .
- . . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation
- Use God's word to avoid sin
- Avoid sinful desires
- Get rid of sinful influences
- Hate evil and sin

B. Alternatives to Sin

- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to righteousness and God

C. Be Holy

- Be holy as God is holy
- Be set apart for God
- Do not conform to this world
- Do not live as other people do
- Avoid bad company

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 38

Major Pitfalls

I. Pride

A. Pride in Thought

- Do not be proud
- Do not think you are better than others
- Do not be wise in your own eyes
- Do not be self-righteous

B. Pride in Action

- Do not exalt yourself . . .
- . . . Honor others, rather than yourself
- Do not boast about yourself

C. Outcomes of Pride

- Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God
- Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding
- Pride leads to one's downfall

D. Antithesis of Pride: Humility

- Be humble – particularly before God
- Be humble towards others

II. Riches and Sex

A. Riches and Godliness

- Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God
- Riches even draw one away from God
- So, do not love money and be content with what you have

B. Further Warnings about Riches

- Riches are not secure
- Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them
- Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

C. Sexual Sin

- Avoid sexual sin
- Sexual sin has ill consequences
- Sexual sin ultimately results in God’s judgment

D. Prohibited Forms of Sex

- Lust
- Sex apart from marriage
- Prostitution
- Homosexual acts

E. Epilogue: Be Wary

- Be alert and sober
- Examine and evaluate yourself
- Keep a clear conscience

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 39

Hard Times

I. General

A. Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times

- Trouble is characteristic of human life
- Examples of God's people undergoing hard times
- An example of hard times even being attributed to God

B. Mourn Loss

- Mourn and weep over loss – particularly deaths
- Mourn before God

C. Keep in Mind God and His Word

- In hard times, remember God
- Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it
- Take comfort in God's word

D. Trust in God

- Trust in God
- Take refuge in God, for God saves and protects those who do

E. Hope in God and Wait for Him

- Put your hope in God . . .
- . . . Look resolutely and expectantly to God

- Wait for God, with confidence that he will act
- Wait quietly and patiently

II. Praying in Hard Times

A. Tell God about Your Problems

- When facing trouble, pray to God
- Tell God of your plight and how you feel
- Pour out your heart to God

B. Ask God for Help

- Cry out to God for help
- Ask God for strength
- Ask God to guide you
- Ask God for deliverance
- Persist in prayer to God

C. Praise and Rejoice in God

- Praise and thank God amidst trouble
- Rejoice in God amidst trouble

D. Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering

- God is near us in hard times
- God comforts his people in hard times
- Testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble

➜ *Major Headings*

Chapter 40

Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People

A. The Reality of Persecution

- Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .
- . . . It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering
- Spreading the gospel can result in suffering
- God's people are hated

B. The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

- The antichrist will have great authority and be worshiped
- Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist
- "Three and a half years" is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution

C. God's Care of Persecuted Believers

- God strengthens his people amidst trials
- God rescues his people from trials
- God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times

II. What to Do in Persecution

A. Be Faithful to God and Endure

- Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ
- Endure persecution
- Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .
- . . . and share in Jesus Christ's sufferings

B. Have Faith in God and Pray

- Have faith and hope in God
- Do not be afraid
- Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say
- Pray to God, asking for help
- Bless and pray for those who persecute you

C. Rejoice

- Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues
- Rejoice because of rewards for enduring persecution

D. Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

- Blessings amidst suffering
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➜ *Major Headings*

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Persecuted Christians

Bible Study Questions

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Chapter 1

God's Being

I. Basics

- How does (or how should) the realization that God is everywhere affect you?
- What is the relationship between God's glory and his presence?
- What makes God a personal being?
- What evidence is there that God interacts with people?
- How can we relate to God if we cannot see him?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Pre-Eminence

- Why is God greater than everyone and everything else? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)
- What is something about God that is beyond your ability to comprehend?
- What are the implications of God's supreme power for the world?
- Knowing that God can do all things, is there anything that you should ask and trust him to do?
- How do you feel about God knowing everything? How does it encourage or challenge you?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 2

God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics

- What does holiness involve?
- What are the implications of God's holiness for us?
- Why is there so much injustice in the world when God is righteous and just?
- How has God shown his faithfulness to you?
- If God is good, how can anger be one of his characteristics?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Loving Characteristics

- Explain in your own words what the Bible means by saying that "God is love" (1Jn 4:8, 16)?
- What do you find particularly remarkable about God's love? How has God shown his love to you?
- What does "compassion" mean? How does God show compassion?
- How would you explain God's jealousy to a non-believer?
- Choose one of God's personality characteristics that you either: (a) greatly value; or (b) need to be more conscious of. Say why you choose this.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 3

Jesus Christ

I. General

- What aspects of Jesus Christ's being and character mark him as being divine?
- What points does Colossians 1:15-18 make that indicate that Jesus Christ is greater than all things?
- What is one attribute of Jesus Christ that you need to be more mindful of in your daily living? How would doing so affect you?
- What does the Bible mean by trusting or calling upon the "name" of Jesus Christ?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Jesus Christ and God

- What does the Bible mean in saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? In what sense is he God's Son?
- Why is the teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God so central and significant to Christianity?
- What do you think Paul means in saying that Jesus Christ is "in very nature God" (Philippians 2:6)?
- In what way/s are Jesus Christ and God one?
- In prayer, should we be conscious of whether we are addressing God or

Jesus Christ (or both)? Does it matter?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 4

The Holy Spirit

I. General

- What does the Bible mean in describing the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of God”?
- How do you find it helpful or encouraging recognizing the personal nature of the Holy Spirit, knowing that he is not simply a thing?
- In what ways does the Holy Spirit communicate?
- Are there any attributes listed that you had not previously associated with the Holy Spirit? Can you think of any other attributes of the Holy Spirit that were not mentioned here?
- How you would explain the Holy Spirit to someone who had not heard of him.

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

- What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit’s relationship to God and Jesus Christ?
- How does Matthew 28:19 imply a very close association – even a oneness – between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?
- What is the significance of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit all having divine attributes?

- In acts that are attributed to all three of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (e.g. giving life, making people holy), do the three of them have the same roles or different ones?
- In what ways are God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit one? In what ways are they different?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 5

Angels, Satan and Demons

I. Angels

- Have you or anyone close to you been aware of having an experience with angels? If so, what was it?
- Why are angels so special?
- What does the teaching about angels in this section show about God?
- In what ways do angels help God's people?
- In what way/s should the Bible's teaching about angels encourage us?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Satan and Demons

- What is one way that Satan deceives people?
- Why should you be wary of but not frightened of Satan?
- What role do you think Satan plays in bad things that happen to Christians – as opposed to God's providence and "chance"?
- How does a person come to be possessed by a demon?
- What can we do for a person possessed by a demon?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 6

God's Creation

I. General

- Do you believe that God created the world? Why or why not?
- How should we respond to the teaching that everyone's life is dependent on God?
- How or in what sense does God provide food for all creatures?
- Jesus Christ has a major role in God's making and maintaining of creation. What does this illustrate about how God interacts with his world?
- What does God being the creator of us and our environment mean for our relationship with him?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Creation of People

- What is one way that the brevity of our lives should affect our thinking and/or our actions?
- What is our "spirit"?
- How should the fact that people are made in God's image influence us?
- What motivation does Scripture give you to care for the environment?
- How could you present (to a non-Christian) the world and how it continues to exist, as evidence for God's existence?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 7

God's Sovereignty

I. God's Supreme Authority

- How should God being the only God affect our attitudes and thoughts?
- What reasons are there to believe that God reigns supreme in the world?
- Choose a verse that impresses on you the supremacy of God's power. Say why you choose it.
- Who are God's enemies and how do they oppose him? What do we know of their defeat?
- What plans has God carried out - in the world and/or in the lives of people you know?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Control over the World

- How should the teaching that God has control over evil influence us?
- Is there anything that makes you conscious of God's control over nature? If so, what and why?
- To what degree does God impose his control over the nations? What does he do?
- How can we reconcile the existence of oppressive regimes with the teaching that God establishes all ruling authorities?

- How is God in control of individual lives? To what extent are people's plans subject to God's will?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 8
God's Word

I. General

- Should we accept every verse of Scripture as God's word? What dangers are there in not doing so?
- In what ways do you think God speaks today?
- What is one characteristic of God's word that you find particularly striking or encouraging? Why?
- How can we use God's word to keep from sinning?
- How can you draw hope and/or joy from God's word?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Key Old Testament Covenants

- What is the importance of God's covenant with Abraham to us?
- Is God's covenant with Israel relevant in any way to God's relationship with his people today? If so, how?
- Which of the Ten Commandments do you need to be more mindful of? How would doing so affect you and your life?
- What difference/s was there between the righteousness granted to Abraham and that made available to Israel through the law?
- What has God done to fulfill his promise to David that David's dynasty

would last forever?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 9

The Problem of Sin

I. General

- Give a definition of sin.
- In what way/s is our nature a “sinful” nature?
- What are some consequences that people experience because of their own sin?
- What does it mean to be “spiritually dead” (Col 2:13)?
- Choose one aspect of the teaching on sin in this study which you think people often overlook. If people took this to heart, how might it change them?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. The Law’s Provision for Israel’s Sin

- Explain as simply as you can the concept of making atonement for a person who has sinned.
- What was the significance of blood being shed in offerings for sin?
- Why was there a need for a priest to offer a sacrifice to God on behalf of a person?
- Why do you think that the Israelites persisted in sin and broke God’s covenant with them?

- How are God’s people today better able than the Israelites to resist sin?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 10

God's Judgment

I. Basics

- How should the assertion that God is the judge of the world encourage us?
- In what ways does God discipline and cleanse his people today?
- What aspects of the above teaching show God's judgment to be just and fair?
- How does knowing that we will be judged and repayed according to what we have done, influence what you do?
- If God did not judge us, would there have been any need for Jesus Christ to die?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

- How do you think God may carry out his judicial retribution in the present time? Are there any happenings that you think may be a manifestation of God's judgment?
- What do you think about God's judgment at times involving horrendous consequences? Do you think it is fair?
- Why do you think that God's judgment of the wicked is not more immediate?
- Explain the concept of "reaping" what one "sows".

- What lessons can we learn from Israel and its experience of God's judgment and mercy?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 11

God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity

- What elements of the gospel message are in the passages from Isaiah 53?
- Why is the assertion that Jesus Christ is the Messiah so significant to the Christian faith?
- What messianic prophecies does Jesus Christ fulfill? (Do not confine your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)
- How could you use Jesus Christ's fulfillment of messianic prophecies in testifying to other people about Jesus Christ?
- What do you find to be the most compelling evidence that Jesus Christ is the Messiah?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

- What does the teaching that God sent Jesus - including the reasons for him doing so - show us about God?
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to become fully human?
- Why is the doctrine of the "virgin birth" important? What does it show about Jesus?
- Choose one of Jesus' personal characteristics that you need to work on imitating. (It does not need to be one listed in this section.) What is a

situation where you could show more of this?

- What does the assertion that God works through Jesus Christ show about their relationship?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 12

Jesus Christ's Mission

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

- What is one situation where being more conscious of Jesus Christ's authority would help you? How would it influence you?
- Are there any aspects of God's empowerment of Jesus that have parallels to God's work through Christians?
- What bearing should Jesus Christ's knowledge and wisdom have on your relationship with him (e.g. in trusting him)?
- How or in what sense did God work through Jesus Christ?
- What is one major plan or goal that you have in life? To what degree is it based (as Jesus' life was) on God's will?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

- How is the power that Jesus displayed relevant to our lives today?
- What things about Jesus' life and teaching set him apart from other great teachers and their teaching?
- What did Jesus mean by saying that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt 4:17)?
- Choose an aspect of Jesus' suffering and death that you find moving or particularly notable, and say why.

- What makes you think Jesus was raised from the dead? (The group could make a list of reasons which could be used in talking to someone who is skeptical about it.)

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 13

Salvation through Jesus Christ

I. Salvation from Sin

- The New Testament often refers to Jesus Christ's "blood". What is the significance of his "blood"?
- How does Jesus Christ's death make atonement for sin?
- Explain what the New Testament means by the term "righteousness". As part of your explanation, say how a person can become "righteous".
- In what way/s does Jesus Christ and his death free us from sin?
- Why is it so important that Jesus was raised from the dead? What would be the implications if he only died and did not rise from the dead?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Salvation for the World

- Explain what Jesus meant in saying: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)
- How can simply believing in Jesus Christ bring eternal life?
- How can the death of just one person, Jesus Christ, make amends for the sins of all people?
- What is this "life" that people can have "abundantly" (John 10:10)?
- What is involved in becoming or being a child of Abraham?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 14

The New Order

I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

- How does faith in Jesus Christ lead to righteousness?
- How would you explain God's grace to somebody who was not familiar with it?
- In what way did Jesus Christ realize or fulfill the law?
- In what sense have God's people been released from the Old Testament Law?
- How is the Old Testament Law relevant to Christians?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Key Elements of the New Order

- What is the new covenant that God introduced through Jesus Christ?
- How is the new covenant better than the old covenant?
- What does Jesus Christ do in his role as high priest? How is this encouraging for you?
- Explain what the kingdom of God involves.
- How or to what degree do you think Jesus Christ asserts his sovereign authority today?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 15

‘The Last Things’

I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Judgment

- Are there any signs in the world today that Jesus Christ’s return may be drawing near?
- How does the teaching about Christ’s return motivate and encourage you?
- What do you find most challenging about the Bible’s teaching on the final judgment, either in relation to yourself or to other people?
- What factors will be taken into account when each person is judged?
- What is your understanding of “the millennium”? Is there one of the common views that you think is most likely correct?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. The Afterlife

- Do you think much about eternity? What do you think it will involve for you?
- List three ways in which the new creation will be better than the old. (You do not need to limit your answer to only what is mentioned in the above verses.)
- What do you think that the “glory” that God’s people will have will involve?
- What does the prospect of living with and seeing God mean to you?

- Have you become somewhat indifferent to the teaching about hell? How should we respond to it (e.g. in regard to ourselves or to others)?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 16

The Standing of God's People

I. Basics

- What role does God play in a person becoming a Christian? What does the person do?
- Why do Christians actually belong to God?
- What is one significant way in which belonging to the family of God should affect our relationships with other Christians?
- What are some key characteristics that mark the church as different from other organizations?
- In what sense is the church God's temple? How should this affect the way we relate to one another in our church life?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

- What does being "in Jesus Christ" mean?
- What are the implications or blessings of being "in Jesus Christ"?
- In what sense do believers live with Jesus Christ?
- What sorts of things should we do as working members of the body of Christ?
- What do you think relating to God through Jesus Christ involves?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 17

Keys to God's Interaction

I. Basics

- If we took the reality of God's presence with us to heart, how would it affect the way we think and act?
- How do or how can God's people actually know God?
- How does God show his love to you?
- What is one of God's promises that you rely on (or try to rely on) in everyday life?
- What does "grace" mean? Give a brief description of God's grace.

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

- What is significant about having the Holy Spirit?
- How can we be confident that we do have the Holy Spirit?
- Choose one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (in The Holy Spirit produces spiritual "fruit" in God's people) that you need to focus on nurturing in yourself. What steps could you take to do this?
- How does the Holy Spirit help us?
- What should we do in order to rely on the Holy Spirit's help?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 18

God's Transformation of His People

I. General

- Describe in your own words the "spiritual life" that believers have.
- In what ways are Christians a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)? What old things have gone?
- What changes do you see in yourself, compared to before you became a Christian? How are you more like Jesus Christ?
- Have you been conscious of God's discipline or testing? What is one point or verse in this section that you would find encouraging during such times?
- How does God teach his people?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Spiritual Attributes

- Choose one of love, faith and hope - and say what is unique about the believer's experience of it.
- What did Jesus mean in speaking of his disciples' joy being "complete" (cf. John 15:11)?
- To what degree do you experience God's joy and peace? What things can we do to have more of this joy and peace?
- What wisdom and knowledge does a Christian have that others do not have? How do Christians come to have such wisdom and knowledge?

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

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 19

God's Care of His People

I. God's Saving of His People

- How should believing that God is always able to save, affect the way we act and think?
- What troubles with adversaries have you had in which God has helped you?
- Is there anything that you need God to set you free from? What can you do to receive his help?
- In what sense had John's readers "conquered the evil one" (1Jn 2:14b)?
- Even with all the wonderful promises in the Bible, dreadful things still happen to some of God's people. Why do you think this is so?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Preservation of His People

- How does God provide for you? How do you or how should you respond to this?
- In what ways does God strengthen his people? (Answer as if you were explaining this to a new Christian.)
- How is God a "refuge" for his people? What did David mean in speaking of taking refuge in God (cf. 2Sam 22:2-3)?
- What assurance do we have that God will keep us, protecting us from

being snatched away from him - or falling away from him?

- Choose a verse from this or the previous study to bear in mind during difficult times. Either rewrite it in your own words or say why you chose it.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 20

God's Plans for His People

I. General

- How specific do you think God's plans are for each Christian?
- What examples do you know of, where God has worked in bad things for his purposes?
- Are you aware of a particular role or kind of work that God wants you to do? If not, what can you do to be open to God guiding you towards the work he wants you to do?
- Pick a verse or concept that should make an impact on a Christian's approach to serving God. What impact should this have?
- How does God guide us?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. God's Plans for Israel

- How do you interpret or understand the Old Testament prophecies of Israel's future renewal?
- How does Israel's promised spiritual renewal mirror the renewed relationship of God and his people that has followed what Jesus Christ accomplished?
- What aspects of our life with God in the afterlife are reflected here?
- What encouragement can believers today draw from these verses?

- What is the position or relationship of modern-day Israel in relation to God’s people in general?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 21
Being Right with God

I. Getting Right with God

- Why do we need to become like little children to enter God's kingdom (cf. Matt 18:2-4)?
- Explain in your own words what it means to "repent".
- What does believing in Jesus Christ involve?
- Explain the relationship between being forgiven and being made righteous or justified.
- Are you sure of being right with God – and of salvation? If so, why?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Staying Right with God

- Why do you obey God?
- Why is it important for believers to do good deeds?
- How do we live by the Holy Spirit?
- What do you need to bear in mind the most in order to better live by the Holy Spirit?
- What does living "in" Jesus Christ involve?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 22
Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope

- What tips could you give to a younger Christian on how to “live by faith”?
- How does trusting in God help you?
- What is something that you need to learn to have faith in God to do?
- What does putting your hope in God involve doing?
- Why is hope important for faith? Can you think of any other reasons why hope is important?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. What Not to Do

- At what times do you doubt or lack faith? How can you counteract this?
- What would you say to a believer beset with fear, to help them to instead trust in God?
- What will you do the next time you get afraid or worried? (You could pick a verse to learn, in order to recall when faced with fear or worry.)
- Do you trust in anything besides God? If so, what could you do to change the focus of your trust to God?
- Choose a verse from this study to bear in mind for the next time you begin to be afraid or worry. Either rewrite it in your own words or say why you

chose it.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 23

Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

I. Loving and Fearing God

- How does one love God? How can you love God more?
- Why do you think that, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," is the greatest commandment?
- What does fearing God involve? What differences are there between fearing God and fearing other people or things?
- Do you agree that fear of God counteracts fear of people or things? If so, why?
- How do you feel about the idea of fearing God? What is good about it?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Obeying God

- What is one thing you could bear in mind or do that would help you obey God better?
- What measures could you take to more effectively read and learn God's word?
- What are the main attractions that tempt you to not obey God? Choose one thing (not necessarily from this chapter) that diminishes such attractions.
- What does being a disciple of Jesus Christ involve?

- Choose one aspect of Jesus Christ's example that you should imitate better. What is a situation you are likely to encounter in which you could do so?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 24

Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God

- What does “seeking God” involve doing?
- What do you think about during times of inactivity (e.g. travelling on the train)? What could you do to remind yourself to focus on God in such times – as well as at other times?
- Do you need to make better provision in your daily routine for meeting with God? If so, what could you do?
- How is knowing God similar and/or different to knowing another person?
- What can we do to know God better?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Praying to God

- How does one “pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20)?
- What is meant by “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? How can we do this?
- What is the significance of asking for things in Jesus’ name?
- How do you think fasting helps in praying?
- Will you receive whatever you ask for in prayer, if you believe? Explain your answer.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 25

Exalting God

I. Instructions

- What effect does praising and thanking God have on you?
- What measures could you take to help yourself consistently praise and give thanks to God?
- What is one thing in your everyday life that you would approach differently if you kept in mind the command to "do everything for the glory of God" (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31)?
- How does a person "rejoice"? What does it involve doing?
- What are some ways that believers today may be prone to dishonor God?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Reasons to Exalt God

- What is one of the things that you find most amazing about God?
- Choose a verse (not necessarily from this study) that particularly inspires you to praise God. Explain why it does.
- What is something that has occurred recently that you could praise or thank God for?
- State one thing about God or one thing he has done, that you can readily rejoice in.

- Make a list (to refer to in your prayer times) of things for which to praise and/or thank God, including concepts and even verses from this and the previous sections.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 26

Being One Body

I. General

- Why is it important to meet together with other Christians?
- What is meant by: “Submit to one another” (Eph 5:21)? What are some common situations in which we ought to do this?
- What is involved in having fellowship with other believers?
- What do you (or could you) share in with people in your church?
- Why does loving other Christians indicate that we are people of God?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Caring for the Body

- What is involved in praying “earnestly”?
- What steps could you take to pray more consistently for members of your church?
- Can you think of a time when another Christian encouraged you? How did this affect you?
- What could you do this week to encourage a particular Christian in need of it?
- Are you aware of anyone in your church that needs practical support? How could you assist them?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 27

Worshiping God

I. General

- What aspects of your church's worship times do you enjoy most? Is there any change that you would like to suggest?
- Why should we worship God? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)
- What does it mean to worship God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24)?
- How do we worship God "with reverence and awe" (Heb 12:28)?
- What do you do to worship God? Is there anything else that you should do?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Offerings

- Why is it important to give to God?
- Do you agree that we should give the "firstfruits" to God? If so, why do you think it is important to do so?
- How is Mark 12:41-44 applicable to us?
- Is there any change you should make in how or what you give to God?
- To what extent is your life a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1)?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 28
Serving God

I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

- Why should we serve God? And how are we better off for doing so?
- What should we do to prepare ourselves to serve God?
- How devoted are you to serving God? What changes could you make to be more devoted?
- What do you understand Jesus to mean when he says that God "cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit" (John 15:2)?
- What should one do in seeking to be guided by God?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Doing God's Work

- How can we ensure our work will produce "the kind of fruit that will last" (John 15:16)?
- In what ways should the following factors influence us in doing God's work: without Jesus we "can accomplish nothing" (John 15:5); and it is God who makes the fruit of our work "sprout and grow" (1Cor 3:6-7)?
- What are the advantages of working with other believers in serving God?
- Which gift of the Holy Spirit do you think you have? If you are not sure, how could you find out?

- What work do you do for God? What other work could you do for God?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 29

Significant Practices

I. Symbolic Rites

- What is meant by being baptized in (or into) the name of Jesus Christ?
- Does a person need to be baptized to be a Christian?
- Explain the significance or meaning of the Lord's Supper?
- Should you do anything differently when you take part in the Lord's Supper (either before or during it)?
- Is there any practice amongst Christians and churches today that you think is – like circumcision – needless, or even detrimental?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Other Significant Practices

- What does "confessing" Jesus Christ involve?
- Why is it important to confess Jesus Christ?
- What are the advantages or benefits of keeping the Sabbath holy?
- How could you use fasting in your life as a believer?
- What is the significance of laying hands on people?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 30

Church Leadership

I. General

- What part does God take in the choosing of church leaders? How can churches take this into account when choosing leaders?
- State two or three key ways in which a leader should be an example for others to follow.
- What aspect of care do you yourself value the most in a church leader?
- What things should a church leader do to strengthen members in the faith?
- What do you do in fulfilling your responsibilities as a church member towards your leader/s? Is there anything else you could do?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Teaching in the Church

- Why is the Bible critical for Christian teaching?
- What is one aspect of the way good preachers teach that you find helpful, as a listener?
- Choose a common characteristic of false teaching and – if you can –give an example of how it can be seen in false teaching in the church today.
- How can we recognize false teachers and false teaching?
- If you were aware of false teaching in your church or fellowship, what

action could you take?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 31
Love

I. Loving Qualities

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 mentions a number of characteristics of love. Which of these do you: value the most; and need to bear in mind the most (in order to better love others)?
- Do you have enemies? What can you do to love them?
- How is a person who forgives better off for doing so? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)
- In what ways do you judge others? How can you avoid doing this?
- Consider the actions/principles being proposed in Matthew 5:38-42 (Be Meek). Can you think of a situation you may well find yourself in, where one of these could be applied?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Antitheses of Love

- Choose one person that you have a lot of contact with. What is one way or area in which you could put their interests ahead of your own?
- How do you deal with your anger? Do you have any tips on how to control anger?
- What causes bitterness? What outcomes can it have if we remain bitter?
- How can we stop ourselves from grumbling or complaining?

- Which of the things mentioned do you see as most prominent in yourself? What verse/s could you use to help counteract this?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 32
Justice

I. Justice in Action

- Why is it more important to do what is right and just than to make offerings to God (cf. Prov 21:3)?
- Are there any situations where you find it hard not to show favoritism?
- To what extent is Jesus' command to sell your possessions and give to the poor (Luke 12:33) meant to be taken literally?
- Why is giving justice to the poor linked with knowing God (Jer 22:15b-16a)?
- Almost all of us are able to do more to speak up for and provide for the poor. What could you do? What do you intend to do?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Being True

- Give an example of how a person has shown faithfulness to you. Describe what it meant to you.
- What does integrity involve?
- Is telling a lie ever justifiable?
- Is there anything in which you find it hard not to be hypocritical?
- Is there a situation where you might be tempted to make dishonest gain?

How can one who is susceptible to such temptations learn to resist?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 33
Wisdom

I. Being Wise

- How can one distinguish between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom? What is the difference?
- Do you actively try to gain more wisdom? What things should you do - or do differently - to achieve this?
- What personality traits or attitudes help one to readily accept correction and rebuke?
- What areas of weakness do you have in regard to your speech? What can you do about them?
- How does one's heart determines one's words (cf. Matthew 12:34-35)?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

- Explain the connection between foolishness and ungodliness.
- If one has a quick temper, what measures could one take to keep it in check? For example, what personal attributes could one develop to counter it?
- How does sin lead to spiritual ignorance?
- How do people become closed-minded? How can we recognize if we ourselves are closed-minded (e.g. in regard to aspects of the Bible's

teachings)?

- How can a person study the Scriptures thoroughly, yet like the Jewish religious leaders (cf. John 5:39-40) fail to grasp key things that they say?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 34

Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships

- What are some specific things husbands should do in applying the teaching regarding loving their wives?
- Should wives submit to their husbands? Explain your answer.
- What aspects of your parents' love and care did you value and feel you should imitate?
- What things should disciplining of children involve – and not involve?
- What other things could you do for your parents and/or grandparents?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Civil Relationships

- Is there a situation where you find it hard to obey the governing authorities? Is there anything that you can or should do about it?
- In what sense are the governing authorities God's servants (cf. Rom 13:3b-4)?
- What can we do on behalf of other citizens who are not treated justly by the authorities - in our own country or overseas (e.g. in regard to Christians persecuted by their government)? What do you intend to do?
- Are you in a position of authority over others? If so, how can you improve the way you relate to those under your authority?

- In relating to your employer, what do you need to keep in mind the most?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 35
Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions

- Write down what you think are the main points to mention when telling someone the gospel.
- What should we tell people about the kingdom of God?
- What have you witnessed personally (regarding God or Jesus Christ) that you can tell others about?
- Is there anything in this section that you - or Christians generally – tend to overlook when spreading the gospel?
- Who could you share the gospel with? Do you need to do anything beforehand to prepare?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Insights

- What evidence is there that the gospel message has not been made up? Do you know of a good book or resource about this?
- What responsibility do you feel to tell others the gospel?
- Can you tell of any instances – ones you have either witnessed or know of – where you are sure of God's power being behind the spreading of the gospel?
- What teaching about God and the Holy Spirit's role in the spreading of the

gospel do you need to be most mindful of? Why?

- What teachings in this section do you personally find the most motivating to spread the gospel?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 36
Standing Firm

I. General

- What challenges do you face in remaining faithful to God? What advice could you give to someone facing similar challenges?
- What could you do in order to more persistently meditate/focus on God's word? Are there any themes in God's word that you especially need to focus on at this time?
- What motivates you to persist in the faith?
- Are any of the signs of the end approaching (cf. Matt 24:4-14, 26-27) more prevalent now than ever before?
- Are you ready for Jesus Christ's return? If you knew he was returning in the next twelve months, what would you do differently?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Spiritual Warfare

- In what ways are you aware of spiritual warfare?
- Some people worry a lot about Satan and demons, while others are not concerned at all. How should we view them?
- What is one spiritual weapon you could make better use of? How could you?
- Explain Paul's claim that believers have "complete victory" through Christ

against adversaries and hardship (Rom 8:37; cf. vv. 31-39).

- Do you have any “gods”, things that you give a higher priority to than you do to God? If so, what can you do about them?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 37

Rejecting Sin

I. Encountering Sin

- What effects of sin have you been aware of in your own life, or in the lives of people you know?
- What should we do about sin that we have committed?
- What is involved in turning back to God with all our heart (cf. Joel 2:12)?
- Why is it important to be sorry for sin? To what extent should we be sorrowful?
- Is there any response to our own sin that is mentioned here, that you have not previously considered or often overlook? If so, how do you think this response might be helpful?

➔ *Back to Part I*

II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

- Explain in your own words what it means to “live according to the Spirit” (cf. Romans 8:3b-5)?
- How does being preoccupied with doing what is right – including doing good deeds – help us to avoid sin? What right or good things could you be more focused on doing?
- What suggestions would you give to someone who is struggling to avoid sin?

- What is involved in being holy?
- Is there anything of this world – even something that is not necessarily sinful in itself – which you need to separate yourself from?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 38
Major Pitfalls

I. Pride

- What are the dangers of thinking that you are wise or clever?
- How can we avoid being self-righteous?
- Why is pride so detrimental to a relationship with God?
- Do you boast about yourself in any subtle (or not so subtle) way?
- How does one “be humble”? What attitudes and actions does it involve?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Riches and Sex

- How do riches form a barrier to our relationship with God?
- If you are presently contemplating buying new clothes or making renovations to your house, how necessary are these? What steps can we take in order to be content and get by with what we have?
- Do you use/invest your money primarily for your future on earth or your future in the afterlife?
- How is sexual sin detrimental to oneself?
- What should we do in order to “test and examine our ways” (Lam 3:40)?

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 39

Hard Times

I. General

- Are there any phrases and depictions of suffering in these verses that you identify with – from past or present experience of intense suffering? If so, which?
- How do you think you would find it helpful to grieve and mourn over loss "before" God?
- Is there a verse/s that you turn to in hard times – or can you think of one/s that would be helpful? If so, share it with the group.
- What is involved in trusting in God during suffering?
- How should we apply Old Testament verses such as Psalms 91:9-12 in the light of New Testament verses which speak of faithfulness to Jesus Christ bringing suffering, even death?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. Praying in 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?

- With a difficult time in your life in view – past or present – compose a prayer acknowledging your difficulty but also giving praise and thanks to God. Perhaps draw upon phrases from the verses.
- Can you think of a time when God responded to suffering – either in your life or that of someone close to you?

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Pray for persecuted Christians

Chapter 40

Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People

- What kinds of persecution, if any, have you faced because of your faith?
- Believers in some countries face intense persecution. What obligations do we have to them as fellow believers? How can we support them?
- What is your understanding of the concept of an antichrist of the end times?
- What points should Christians bear in mind from the teachings about the time of the beast or antichrist, even in facing persecution in the present?
- Choose a verse or passage from the last section (God's Care of Persecuted Believers) that you find particularly striking or encouraging. How would you use it or find it helpful when facing persecution?

➜ *Back to Part I*

II. What to Do in Persecution

- How do faith and hope inspire endurance (cf. 2 Thes 1:4; 1 Thes 1:3)?
- What attitude and actions should be part of our response to those who persecute us?
- How could you bring yourself to rejoice in persecution and difficulties?
- What would you do if you were experiencing persecution? How could you bring yourself to respond in the ways mentioned in this section?

- Choose a blessing of enduring persecution and difficulties – not necessarily from this chapter – that you can particularly relate to. (It may be one you have experienced or simply find encouraging.) Say why you chose it.

➜ *Back to Part II*

Pray for persecuted Christians

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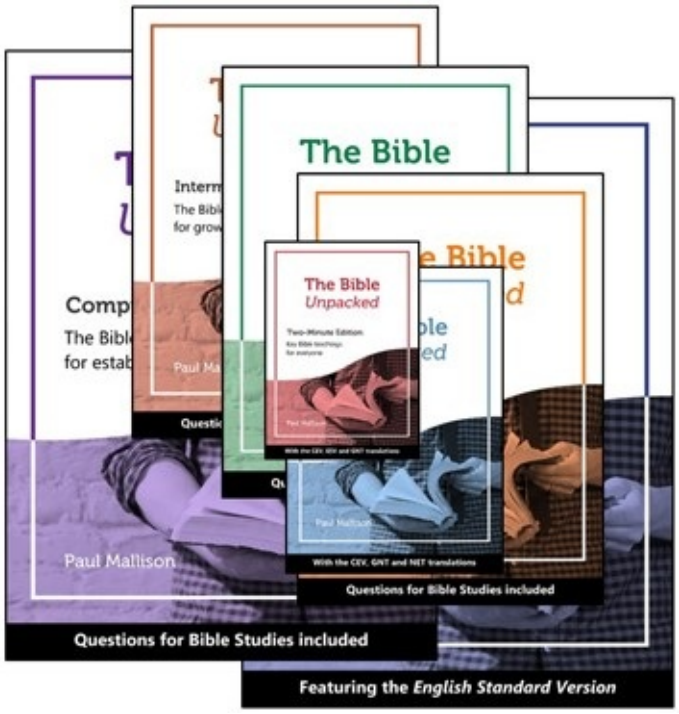
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The Seven Editions



There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, aiming to address the needs of non-Christians through to mature Christians, from teenagers to adults. There are also studies based on four of the editions. The studies contain the same text, but include questions at the end of each section.

Apart from the longest edition, each edition is an abbreviated version of the next one. The editions are as follows.

Two-Minute Edition

Key Bible teachings for everyone

For giving to non-Christians. (Credit card size for keeping in wallet or purse.)

Pocket Edition

Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth

Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or to young new Christians.

Concise Edition

Key Bible teachings for new believers

For either new or young Christians. Also for giving to non-Christian friends.

Has **Bible study** questions, ideal for new or young believers.

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The Bible's teaching condensed for young believers

For newer Christians, wanting a firm grounding in their faith.

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The Bible's teaching summarized for growing believers

For Christians wanting to develop a sound understanding of the faith. Very suitable for use as a study or a devotional tool.

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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 below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund

www.barnabasfund.org

Barnabas Fund provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local leaders.

Christian Solidarity International

csi-usa.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

www.csw.org.uk

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

Open Doors

www.opendoors.org

Open Doors provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission

www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See www.idop.org regarding the International Day of Prayer.

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; bl.org.au/

The Bible League provides Bibles for persecuted Christians. It also trains national believers to plant new churches in countries of persecution.

Voice of the Martyrs

www.persecution.com

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

World Watch Monitor

www.worldwatchmonitor.org

World Watch Monitor reports the story of Christians around the world under

pressure for their faith.

And the King will answer them,
‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’
– Matthew 25:40