

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible's teaching presented
for Bible students

Paul Mallison

The Bible UnpackedTM

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The Bible's teaching presented
for Bible students

35. Spreading the Gospel

Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

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

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

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. Instructions

The theme of spreading the gospel, or message about Jesus Christ, pervades the New Testament and should be also one of the main focuses of our lives. This section largely looks at what we need to say and do, in advancing the spread of the gospel.

a) Tell Others the Gospel

Tell others the gospel message . . .

ACTS 5:20 [AN ANGEL, TO THE APOSTLES:] “Go and stand in the Temple, and *tell the people all about this new life.*” GNT

LUKE 3:18 In many different ways *John preached the good news to the people.* CEV

. . . Tell them the gospel about Jesus Christ

ACTS 8:35 So Philip started speaking, and beginning with this scripture *proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him* [an Ethiopian official]. NET

1THES 3:2B [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] Timothy, our brother, works with us for God and *helps us tell people the Good News about Christ.* We sent him to strengthen and encourage you in your faith ... NCV™

Tell all people, everywhere

MARK 16:15, 20 Then he [Jesus] told them: *Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world.* ... ²⁰*Then the disciples left and preached everywhere.* The Lord was with them, and the miracles they worked proved that their message was true. CEV

Continue to tell others the gospel despite suffering for doing so

ACTS 5:40, 42 They [the Jewish council] *called the apostles in, beat them, and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus again.* Then they let them go free. ... ⁴²*Every day in the Temple and in people’s homes they [the apostles] continued teaching the people and telling the Good News—that Jesus is the Christ.* NCV™

Do not be ashamed of the gospel, even despite suffering for it

ROM 1:16 [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.* NET

2TIM 1:8 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, a prisoner for his sake, but by God's power accept your share of suffering for the gospel.* NET

Try to persuade people to believe and respond to the gospel

ACTS 17:2–4 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining 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."*⁴ *And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.* ESV

2COR 5:11A [PAUL:] *As people who know what it means to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.* GW

Paul's healthy fear of Christ (cf. vv. 9–10) motivated him to please Christ by trying to persuade people to respond to the gospel.

Should you be more "active in sharing your faith" (Philem 1:6)? If so, what measures could you put in place to help you be more active?

Do you risk suffering or other difficulties by telling others the gospel? How should believers respond to such things?

What could you say to encourage someone who feels too shy or embarrassed to tell others the gospel?

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) What Things to Explain

Who Jesus Christ is

ACTS 9:20 Soon he [Paul] went to the Jewish meeting places and started *telling people that Jesus is the Son of God*. CEV

ACTS 18:5 Now when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, *testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ*. NET

ACTS 2:36 [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*. NET

Jesus Christ's life and deeds

ACTS 2:22 [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*. GNT

Jesus Christ's death and resurrection

1COR 15:1, 3–5 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, *the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, ...* ³For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received – *that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ⁴and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve*. NET

The outcomes of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection

2COR 5:19 [PAUL:] 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*. CEV

ACTS 26:22–23 [PAUL:] I have experienced help from God to this day, and so *I stand testifying to both small and great, saying nothing except what the prophets and Moses said was going to happen: ²³that the Christ was to suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, to proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles*. NET

As a result of Jesus' resurrection, people have been given the "light of salvation" (GNT). This involves the promise of their own resurrection, as alluded to in v. 23 by the reference to Jesus Christ being "the first" to rise from the dead.

The kingdom of God

ACTS 28:23B *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.* NET

What God is like and what he has done . . .

Ps 96:2-3 Sing to the LORD! Bless his name! *Proclaim his deliverance every day! ³Declare his glory among the nations and his awesome deeds among all the peoples!* ISV

ACTS 17:23-27 [PAUL, TO THE PEOPLE OF ATHENS:] For as I went around and observed closely your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown god.' Therefore what you worship without knowing it, *this I proclaim to you.* ²⁴*The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. ²⁶From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.* NET

. . . and what God has done for you

Ps 118:14, 17 [A PSALMIST:] *The LORD gives me strength and protects me; he has become my deliverer.* " ... ¹⁷*I will not die, but live, and I will proclaim what the LORD has done.* NET

LUKE 8:39 [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. NET

What else you have seen and heard (of God and Jesus Christ)

ACTS 22:15 [ANANIAS, TO SAUL/PAUL:] You will *be his witness to all people, telling them about what you have seen and heard.* NCV™

How people should respond

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

What should we tell people about the kingdom of God?

What have you witnessed personally (regarding God and Jesus Christ) which you can tell others about?

Write down what you think are the main points you should mention when telling someone the gospel.

c) How to Spread the Message

Present the gospel accurately and plainly

ACTS 18:25 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. NET

2COR 4:2B [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. NCV™

The manner in which to present the gospel message

1PET 3:15B–16A *Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, ¹⁶but do it with gentleness and respect.* GNT

COL 4:6 *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.* NET

Defending or speaking of the gospel message is probably primarily in view here. The expression "seasoned with salt" most likely means either interesting (CEV, GNT) or pure.

Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit

1PET 1:12 They 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. NET

Spreading the gospel by the Holy Spirit involves relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance and power.

Spread the gospel boldly . . .

ACTS 9:28 So he [Saul] was staying with them, associating openly with them in Jerusalem, *speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.* NET

. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God's help

1THES 2:2 [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. CEV

Work hard at spreading the gospel message

COL 1:28–29 [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.* 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.

Note: Spreading the gospel is not to be done for profit . . .

2COR 2:17 [PAUL:] *For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God.* NET

. . . Take measures not to be a financial burden

1THES 2:9 [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] You remember, brothers, our labor and toil. *We worked night and day so that we would not become a burden to any of you while we proclaimed the gospel of God to you.* ISV

How can you better spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit and with God’s help? (Perhaps there is something that you should do more or need to keep in mind.)

What reasons do Christians have to be fearless in spreading the gospel?

Is there anything in this section that you – or Christians generally – overlook when spreading the gospel?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Supplementary Actions

Pray for your proclamation of the gospel . . .

ACTS 4:29–31 [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.* NET

. . . and pray for others who proclaim the gospel

COL 4:3–4 [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.* CEV

Pray for the salvation of unbelievers

ROM 10:1 [PAUL:] Brothers and sisters, *my heart's desire and prayer to God on behalf of my fellow Israelites is for their salvation.* NET

Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel

1COR 9:12 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] If others have the right to expect this from you, don't we deserve even more? But *we haven't used our rights. Instead, we would put up with anything in order not to hinder the Good News of Christ in any way.* GW

1COR 10:33 [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.* GNT

Live and act in a way that is consistent with the gospel

PHIL 1:27 [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, ... 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”.

In so doing, you will not be discredited . . .

2COR 6:3 [PAUL:] *We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ...* ESV

Paul asserts that he and companions did nothing that would discredit their ministry and so be an obstacle to anyone’s response.

. . . Instead you will have credibility, attracting others to the gospel

2COR 6:4 [PAUL:] *But in everything and in every way we show that we truly are God’s servants.* CEV

TITUS 2:9–10 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TITUS WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVING SLAVES:] *Slaves are to submit themselves to their masters in everything, aiming to please them and not argue with them¹⁰ or steal from them. Instead, they are to show complete and perfect loyalty, so that in every way they may make the teaching about God our Savior more attractive.* ISV

Support others spreading the gospel

2COR 11:7–8 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] *Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you could be exalted, because I proclaimed the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so that I could serve you!*

NET

Various churches supported Paul in his work of preaching the gospel, allowing him to preach it free of charge.

Note: Guard the gospel message

1TIM 6:20 [PAUL:] *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the pointless discussions and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.* ISV

GAL 2:4–5 [PAUL:] *However, false brothers were secretly brought in. They slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in the Messiah Jesus so that they might enslave us. ⁵But we did not give in to them for a*

moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. ^{ISV}

We are to guard the gospel message from being distorted. As such we need to guard: our own understanding and version of the gospel (1Tim 6:20 ↑); and the gospel message from being distorted by others (cf. Gal 2:4–5 ↑).

Write down some points you should begin praying about regarding the spreading of the gospel. (You could draw on aspects of the verses in the first two subsections above.)

Who can you support in spreading the gospel? What can you do to support them?

What things are there about the way Christians live that attracts others to the gospel? What could you do/change to make your life more likely to attract others to the gospel?

Pray for persecuted Christians

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.

a) Insights on the Gospel Message

The gospel is not made up by men – it is true

GAL 1:11–12 [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.* NET

ACTS 26:25–26 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.* 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 hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ

EPH 3:8B–9 [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, ...* ESV

The gospel is of God’s grace

ACTS 20:24 [PAUL:] But I don’t place any value on my life, if only I can finish my race and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus of testifying *to the gospel of God’s grace.* ISV

The gospel message about Jesus Christ is founded on and manifests God’s grace.

The gospel is good news

ACTS 10:36A God sent his word to the people of Israel and brought them *the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ.* GW

Note that the Greek word which is often translated as “gospel” basically means “good news”.

However, the message of Jesus Christ is a stumbling block for many people

1PET 2:7-8A This stone is worth much to you who believe. But *to the people who do not believe, “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”*⁸ *Also, he is “a stone that causes people to stumble, a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they do not obey what God says ...* NCV™

Verse 7 speaks of Jesus Christ as the “stone” that was rejected but which has become the cornerstone of God’s kingdom. Verse 8 tells of how the gospel’s message of Jesus Christ – with his death and resurrection – is a stumbling block for many people. They do not believe and obey it. So, figuratively speaking, on the path to God’s salvation they stumble and fall over Christ – and so fail to obtain salvation and life.

Note: Those who do not believe and respond to the gospel will be condemned

2THES 2:12 The result is that *all who have not believed the truth, but have taken pleasure in sin, will be condemned.* GNT

What evidence is there that the gospel message has not been made up? Do you know of a good book or resource about this?

Do you ever lose sight of the fact that the gospel is good news? How could bearing this fact in mind affect how you spread the gospel message (e.g. in what you say or your approach)?

Choose a point from the above verses that encourages you to tell others the gospel – and say why it does.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Need to Spread the Gospel

We have been entrusted with the task of telling the gospel to others . . .

GAL 2:7 [PAUL:] In fact, they saw that *I had been entrusted with telling the Good News to people who are not circumcised as Peter had been entrusted to tell it to those who are circumcised.* GW

Paul had a special commission to preach the gospel (as did Peter). But the principle of being entrusted with telling others the gospel is applicable to all Christians.

. . . and so we are responsible for telling others

ROM 1:14–15 [PAUL:] For *I have an obligation to all peoples, to the civilized and to the savage, to the educated and to the ignorant.* ¹⁵So then, *I am eager to preach the Good News to you also who live in Rome.* 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 message others come to believe . . .

JOHN 17:20 [JESUS:] I'm not praying only for them [the disciples]. I'm also praying for *those who will believe in me through their message.* GW

ACTS 4:4A But *a lot of people who had heard the message believed it.* CEV

. . . and there are many people ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them

MATT 9:36–38 When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”* NET

ROM 10:14 How are they [non-Christians] to call on one they have not believed in? And *how are they to believe in one they have not heard of?* And *how are they to hear without someone preaching to them?* NET

The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it . . .

EPH 1:13A [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.* GNT

MARK 16:15B-16 [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.* NET

. . . As such, the gospel brings life to those who respond

ACTS 5:20 [AN ANGEL, TO THE APOSTLES:] "Go and stand in the temple and keep on telling the people *the whole message about this life.*" ISV

The gospel message tells of the spiritual life that can be gained through Jesus Christ.

What responsibility do you feel to tell others the gospel?

What did Jesus mean by saying that: "The harvest is plentiful..."? How would bearing this in mind more affect your approach to the gospel?

Who could you share the gospel with? Do you need to do anything beforehand to prepare?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

See also:

■ *Prologue: God Draws People to Himself*, Ch. 16

The gospel is the power of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world

ROM 1:16 [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.* NET

1COR 1:18 [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.* NET

The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power . . .

1COR 2:4–5 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] *My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God.* NET

2COR 4:7 [PAUL:] *But we have this treasure in clay jars to show that its extraordinary power comes from God and not from us.* ISV

Believers are like jars of clay, holding the treasure of the gospel. The weakness of their humanity and their often unimpressive appearance serve to show that the "extraordinary power" accompanying the message – moving people to respond, at times through miracles – is from God and not of themselves.

. . . The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief

JOHN 15:26–27 [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, ²⁷and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.* NET

1COR 12:3 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] So I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is

cursed,” and *no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

NET

No one can acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord except by the Holy Spirit, with his enlightenment and conviction about Jesus Christ.

God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles . . .

ACTS 14:3 So they [Paul and Barnabas] stayed there for a considerable time, *speaking out courageously for the Lord, who testified to the message of his grace, granting miraculous signs and wonders to be performed through their hands.* NET

. . . This leads people to turn to God

ROM 15:18–19A [PAUL:] I will be bold and speak only about *what Christ has done through me to lead the Gentiles to obey God. He has done this by means of words and deeds,*¹⁹*by the power of miracles and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God.* GNT

If the gospel is dependent on the Holy Spirit and God’s power rather than on us and our presentation of it, what do we need to do?

Do you know of cases in recent times where the gospel message has been confirmed by miracles? Are there circumstances where this is more likely to occur?

What teaching in this section do you find the most encouraging – or what do you need to be most mindful of? Why?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Further Insights regarding the Gospel

Believers are to be light for the world

ACTS 13:47 [PAUL AND BARNABAS:] For this is what the Lord has commanded us: *'I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'* NET

MATT 5:14–16 *You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.* NET

Christians are to be light for the world, showing the way of God by their character and actions – as well as by spreading the gospel (cf. Acts 13:47 ↑).

Insights regarding spreading the gospel

JOHN 4:36–38 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Already, the one who harvests is being paid and is gathering crops for eternal life. So the one who plants and the one who harvests celebrate at the same time. ³⁷Here the saying is true, 'One person plants, and another harvests.'* ³⁸*I sent you to harvest a crop that you did not work on. Others did the work, and you get to finish up their work.* NCV™

Here Jesus refers to the disciples harvesting souls for eternal life. "Others" (v. 38) may refer to the prophets including John the Baptist and possibly Jesus himself. These others had done the preparatory work for the kingdom and the gospel, and the time was now right – and still is today – to harvest the benefits of their work. Jesus' words may also enunciate a principle which is often seen with the spread of the gospel: some people sow or tell the message, often without any apparent response – while later others, following on from this previous work, lead many to respond.

ROM 10:15B As it is written, *"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!"* ISV

Spreading the good news is a beautiful thing to do.

2COR 4:13–14 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *The scripture says, "I spoke because I believed." In the same spirit of faith, we also speak because we believe. ¹⁴We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus to life, will*

also raise us up with Jesus and take us, together with you, into his presence. GNT

Paul's faith and belief in God – including his confidence that God would raise himself and others from death (v. 14) – motivated Paul to pursue his work of telling others the gospel.

Those who spread the gospel will be blessed

1COR 9:23 [PAUL:] *I do all this for the sake of the gospel in order to have a share in its blessings.* ISV

The gospel has spread far and wide . . .

ACTS 19:20 In that way *the word of the Lord kept spreading and triumphing.* ISV

COL 1:6A [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] This Good News is present with you now. *It is producing results and spreading all over the world* as it did among you from the first day you heard it. GW

The phrase “all over the world” refers to how the gospel was spreading throughout the world Paul knew. However today, two thousand years later, the phrase is very much applicable in a literal sense.

. . . The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end

MATT 24:14 *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.* NET

Explain in your own words the connection between belief and speaking the gospel (cf. 2Cor 4:13). If we do not consciously work towards sharing the gospel message with others, does this say anything about our belief?

How can we support or aid the spreading of the gospel in other nations? (In your answer, try to include some very specific things – e.g. ways of helping particular people or organizations.)

What motivation or inspiration do the above verses provide for spreading the gospel?

Pray for persecuted Christians

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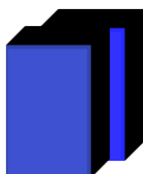
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Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer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

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

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

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin – rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com.au

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

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

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

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

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

World Watch Monitor – www.worldwatchmonitor.org

It reports the story of Christians under pressure for their faith.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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