

# TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

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ACTS 13-28

# DAILY READING NOTES TERM 4 2015

## ACTS 13-28 TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Week	Passage
1	Acts 13:1-14:28
2	Acts 15:1-16:5
3	Acts 16:6-17:15
4	Acts 17:16-18:23
5	Acts 18:24-21:16
6	Acts 21:17-23:35
7	Acts 24:1-26:32
8	Acts 27:1-28:16
9	Acts 28:17-31

**We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.**

Who are you on mission to?

Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself).

**Pray for three friends, once a week, for one minute (3-1-1).**

List the names of your family and friends here:

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## How to use this book:

### 1. PERSONAL READING

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His Word.

### 2. GROWTH GROUPS

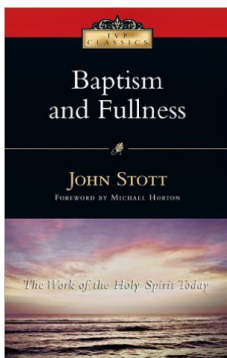
- Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

### 3. CHURCH

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

## SUGGESTED READING

### *'Baptism and Fullness'* by John Stott



“The Christian life is life in the Spirit,” writes John Stott.

“It would be impossible to be a Christian, let alone to live and grow as a Christian, without the ministry of the gracious Spirit of God. All we have and are as Christians we owe to him.”

The Holy Spirit continues to be at work around the world, as numerous renewal movements attest. Yet much confusion and controversy remains regarding the Holy Spirit’s activity. In this classic study, John Stott provides clear biblical exposition on the promise, the fruit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He offers particular guidance on the nature of “the baptism of the Spirit” and whether certain spiritual gifts and experiences should be normative for all Christians. Stott points the way to both greater biblical understanding and deeper fullness of spiritual life.

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# INTRODUCTION

## ACTS 13-28 TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**Together with the Gospel of Luke, Acts is part two of a two-volume set. In Acts 1:1, the author, Luke, reminds us that his first book recorded all that Jesus began to do and teach during His earthly life. The focus of volume two (Acts) is on the next stage of God's purposes through Jesus. After His ascension into Heaven, Jesus poured out His Spirit onto the Apostles, empowering them to boldly declare the saving gospel message, which was to be taken to the ends of the earth.**

By the end of Luke's gospel, we have been taken through an historical account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; the one who all Scripture pointed towards as the Lord and Saviour of the world. As he begins his second book (Acts), Luke records Jesus' commission to His Apostles to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8). This direction from the Lord serves as the key to discerning the book's structure and purpose. In Chapters 1-7, the Apostles boldly speak the gospel throughout Jerusalem, and it has a massive impact despite persecution and opposition. Chapters 8-12 show the gospel reaching beyond the Jewish capital Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and also its initial breakthrough into the Gentile world. By Chapter 13, a Gentile church in Antioch then takes the lead in sending out preachers to see the gospel impact unreached areas. Chapters 13-28 focus on the Apostle Paul's ministry to the nations. The book ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, the centre of the Gentile world. In one sense, the gospel has reached the ends of the earth; from the Jewish capital Jerusalem to the Gentile capital Rome, the gospel has been preached! In another sense, the work has only just begun... But by reaching Rome, the gospel is now in the key location to be propelled to the far corners of the world – to the ends of the earth!

The primary purpose of Acts is to be a faithful record of the history of the work of the Risen Lord Jesus from Heaven, in the spread of the gospel. However, there are big lessons to learn from Acts, which close attention to the reoccurring themes of the book will reveal. Trust in the sovereign God to fulfill His purposes is a key lesson to learn. Nothing will stop God from achieving what He has determined to take place! Dependence on the grace of God for salvation is imperative, made clear through the terms of the Gentiles' inclusion into the people of God in chapter 15. Gratefulness to



the God who even saves Gentiles should abound! Suffering and opposition is to be expected by those who speak of Jesus, but that suffering is not in vain; the Lord will use our weakness to bring others into the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, a deep appreciation of the Apostle Paul's ministry should be a result of time spent in Acts. During Chapters 2-12, the Apostle Peter is the central figure in proclaiming the gospel, but from Chapter 13, Paul takes the lead and Peter fades into the background. Paul becomes central to God's plan to save people from every nation, as God's chosen instrument to the Gentiles. Luke highlights the importance of Paul by making many parallels between Paul and the Lord Jesus Himself. Acceptance of the ministry of Paul is important, because Paul was Jesus' servant. To be a follower of Jesus, will mean to listen to the words of His ambassador, Paul.

This series in Acts 13-28 is titled, 'To the Ends of the Earth', which is taken from Jesus' words in His commission to the Apostles (1:8). The gospel has gone to Jerusalem; it has gone to Judea and Samaria. From Chapter 13, the gospel will cross into Gentile territory; to Rome in Chapter 28; and for the last 2,000 years has been extending its reach further and further, to the ends of the earth...

### **A Basic Outline of Acts 13-28**

- Paul's first missionary journey: The inclusion of the Gentiles. (Chapters 13-14)
- The Jerusalem Council: How are the Gentiles saved? (Chapter 15)
- Paul's second missionary journey: Opposition and belief. (Chapter 16:6-18:23)
- Paul's third missionary journey: Heading for Jerusalem. (Chapter 18:24-21:16).
- In Jerusalem: Paul's arrest and self defence. (Chapter 21:17-23:35)
- Paul on trial. (Chapter 24:1-26:32)
- The journey to Rome. (Chapter 27:1-28:16)
- Rome at last: To the ends of the earth. (Chapter 28:17-31)

# WEEK 1 ACTS 13:1-14:28

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**

Jesus has ascended into Heaven. He has sent His Spirit to His people and empowered them for bold gospel preaching. The gospel has gone to Jerusalem (Chapter 2-7), to Judea and Samaria (Chapter 8), and in a small way, has even begun spreading to the Gentiles (that is, non-Jewish people – see chapter 10). Now, in Acts 13, the Apostle Paul takes the lead in the last part of the mission: taking the gospel to anyone and everyone: to the ends of the earth...

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 13:1-12

1. Looking at verses 1-5, what does the Holy Spirit command, and what does this reveal about God’s purposes?
2. How did Bar-Jesus’ attempt to turn the proconsul from the faith ultimately push him toward the faith (verse 12)?
3. How is the conversion of the proconsul a hint that Barnabas and Saul’s mission will be fruitful?

**Prayer:** The Word of God is powerful! Praise God for His plan to rescue sinners, and for His power to accomplish His plans, even despite opposition. Ask God for boldness to speak the Word of God to those who don’t know Him. Determine who you will aim to speak to this week, and when you will speak to them.

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 9:1-19

1. What is Jesus' plan for Saul? (Verse 15)
  
2. Read 13:1, and then 13:13, 13:16, 13:42, 13:46 and 14:1. What do you notice about the shift in order in which Luke (the author) now refers to Paul and Barnabas? How do you see Jesus' plan for Paul starting to unfold?
  
3. In Acts 13:47, Paul quotes a prophecy from Isaiah 49, which elsewhere is applied to Jesus. How does he say that verse applies to him? How is this good news for us today in 21st century Australia?

**Prayer.** The Apostle Paul was central to God's plan to bring the gospel of Jesus to the world. We have received the saving gospel today because God chose to work through this man. Thank God for His grace to the world through the Apostle Paul. Thank God for using another sinful, broken man like Paul to be a blessing to millions. Ask God to help you rejoice today in your salvation!

# WEEK 1 ACTS 13:1-14:28

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 13:13-41

1. Who is Paul's audience in this chapter? (Verses 14-16)
2. These Jews and God-fearing Gentiles would have been familiar with the storyline of the Old Testament, and would have been waiting for the promised Messiah. How does this influence the way Paul preaches the gospel to them? (Verses 17-41)
3. Looking at verses 32-37, how does Paul show that these Old Testament scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus?
4. How is Paul's conclusion in verses 38-39 an encouragement for you today?

**Prayer:** Praise God for working throughout history to bring about salvation in Jesus. Thank Him for the free gift of forgiveness through Jesus, and that we no longer have to earn or work for salvation. Ask God to enlarge your vision of Him – to see Him for how powerful and gracious He really is, and to honour Him today accordingly.



# DAY 4

## Read Acts 13:38-52

1. What warning does Paul give to the people hearing his message?
2. There are two different responses to Paul and his message. How do the Jews and the Gentiles respond differently?
3. From verses 48-52, make a list of the results of Paul and Barnabas' time in this town.
4. It is a great tragedy that God's people – the Jews – would reject the message of their long-awaited Saviour. But... it is a great grace from God that many Gentiles believed, and that the word of the Lord spread. How is this passage an encouragement, or a warning to you today? What do you want to do differently today in light of this passage?

**Prayer.** Pray that God would help you to continue trusting Jesus, and keep you from hardening your heart as the Jews did. Pray that the word of the Lord would spread on the Central Coast, and in Australia. Pray again for one person you want to speak to this week about Jesus.

# WEEK 1 ACTS 13:1-14:28

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 14:1-28

1. What are the results of Paul and Barnabas' ministry in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe?
2. How does opposition and hostility toward the Apostles escalate through this chapter?
3. For Paul and Barnabas, the cost of testifying to Jesus in these cities is massive (verses 19-20 for example!). But they clearly weren't expecting anything less (verse 22). Why do they persevere in their task?
4. How does being a disciple of Jesus cost you in your day-to-day life? How are the Apostles an encouragement for you?

**Prayer:** Praise God for the Apostles' preaching, and that God used them to save people. Praise Him that you also have heard and received the gospel, by His grace. Ask God to give you strength to follow Him today, whatever the cost.



# NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

# WEEK 2 ACTS 15:1-16:5

**By Acts 15, the gospel had begun bearing fruit among the Gentiles. Non-Jewish people were actually becoming part of the family of God! But what about circumcision? What about the Old Testament commandments? Could these Gentiles remain non-Jewish and still be saved? These are the questions the Jewish Christians now had to wrestle with...**

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 15:1-11

1. What seems to be the issue?
2. What evidences does Peter give to show that God now makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles when it comes to salvation?
3. What had these Jewish Christians forgotten about the gospel? (Hint: verse 11!)

**Prayer.** These verses are a great reminder that our salvation is entirely to do with God and His grace to us, and not anything within us. (Note all the things that God does in these verses!) It is by grace we have been saved. Humility and thankfulness should be the mark of every Christian. Ask God for these qualities, and go about your day rejoicing in your salvation!

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 15:12-19

1. How does James argue that God accepts the Gentile Christians?
2. Part of James' speech includes quoting part of Amos 9. Why would quoting an Old Testament passage be a powerful way to persuade the Jewish Christians of God's acceptance of the Gentiles?
3. Can you think of any other Old Testament passages foretelling the acceptance of the Gentiles? (Optional: have a look at Genesis 12:1-3 to be reminded of just how far back this plan goes!)

**Prayer.** It has been God's plan to rescue people from all nations ever since the beginning of time. The Old Testament foretold what God would do. Rescuing the Gentiles was not an afterthought. Rescuing 21st century Gentiles on the Central Coast is not an afterthought! Praise God for saving us today. Pray that you'd grasp the gravity of His kindness even to us non-Israelites.

# WEEK 2 ACTS 15:1-16:5

## DAY 3

### Read Ephesians 2:11-22

1. In verses 11-12, the Apostle Paul lays out the devastating situation the Gentiles used to be in. What was their situation before the work of Christ?
2. How has their situation now changed because of Jesus? (Verses 13-19)
3. If the Old Testament laws and commands have now been set aside (verse 15), how should a Jewish Christian relate to a Gentile Christian?

**Prayer.** Praise God that Jew and Gentile are united in Christ! There is no longer any law separating us, but rather peace and unity as Christ-people (Christ-ians!). It can be hard for us in 21st century Australia to understand just how big this is... but, it was such a huge thing for Jews to accept Gentile-believers as God's people too! Thank God for this. Also, do you ever think you are superior or better than other Christians? Repent, remembering that all Christians are equal in Christ, and all of us need Christ for salvation.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 15:19-35

1. What requirements do the apostles give the Gentiles in the letter?
2. If it has already been established that we aren't saved by law keeping, but by the grace of the Lord Jesus (15:11), why do they give these requirements?
3. Why might it be important that the Gentile-believers respect the consciences of the Jewish-believers in this way?
4. How do the Gentile Christians in Antioch respond to the letter and the words of Judas and Silas? How is this occasion a beautiful picture of Christian unity?

**Prayer.** It is the infinite wisdom of God that He would (and could!) draw completely different people groups together to be one in Christ. From this passage, we should learn to be gentle with one another, to love one another, and to be careful not to add laws to the law-free gospel of Jesus. How might you pray about this today?

# WEEK 2 ACTS 15:1-16:5

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 15:36-16:5

1. A disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark's involvement in their next activities leads to the one missionary duo (Paul and Barnabas) becoming two (Barnabas and John / Paul and Timothy). Despite their disagreement over who was involved, what was the task they both agreed should happen?
2. In Chapter 15, Paul strongly opposed those teaching that circumcision was necessary for Gentile Christians to be saved. Now we read of Paul circumcising Timothy before taking him on his missionary journey.
  - a. Why does Paul do this?
  - b. How are Paul's actions different from the false teaching taught in 15:1?
3. Paul seems determined not to put any stumbling block in anyone's way, so that all might accept and be deepened in the gospel. How did God use Paul and Timothy to this end (verse 4-5)?

**Prayer:** This week we've been reminded of the grace of the gospel, and the need to love others by not putting stumbling blocks in the way of the gospel. How might you encourage others in the gospel today and this weekend? How will you express the unity you have with other believers this weekend? Thank God for His grace and pray about these things.





# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# WEEK 3 ACTS 16:6-17:15

During the next two weeks, we will read of Paul's second missionary journey, and of the gospel's arrival in Europe for the very first time! As the gospel enters into new territory, two different responses are commonly seen: belief and opposition.

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 16:1-10

1. In verses 6-8, why had Paul's latest journey been slow-going?
2. What happens that directs Paul toward Macedonia?
3. Having been prevented from travelling south into Asia (verse 6), or north into Bithynia (verse 7), his only option now was north-west toward Macedonia. How would this vision have been comforting to Paul, and what did it reveal about God's plan for the spread of the gospel?

**Prayer:** Praise God that the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 were slowly being fulfilled! The gospel was now moving into Europe for the first time, which would later become the first majority-Christian continent! Pray about how God's plan to reach all people with the gospel can shape you today.

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 16:11-15

1. How do you see Paul thinking carefully about where he does ministry?
2. Why is it significant that Lydia – this dealer of purple cloth – is converted?
3. Read Luke 18:25-27. How is the power of God in the gospel seen in Lydia's conversion?
4. How does Lydia then use her means to serve and support Paul in his gospel work?

**Prayer.** "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16). Praise God for opening hearts to respond, bringing salvation, and bringing change. Today's passage is also a reminder to use our means for the glory of God and His purposes. How can you be serving and using what God has given you for His sake today?

# WEEK 3 ACTS 16:6-17:15

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 16:16-40

1. Here we now have Gentile opposition to these gospel messengers. Why do the owners of the slave oppose Paul and Silas? How is that different to the accusation they bring to the magistrates?
2. What opposition and suffering do Paul and Silas face in Philippi?
3. Despite their suffering, what good comes for the slave girl and for the jailer?
4. How is the gospel shown to be unstoppable in Philippi?

**Prayer:** The world can bad-mouth, physically abuse, and lock up the carriers of the gospel message, but God's plan is for people to be saved ... so people will be saved! The name of Jesus Christ brings freedom to the slave girl, and faith in Jesus brings salvation to the jailer and his family, and creates a church in Philippi (verse 40). Praise God for His strength and sovereignty in all circumstances. Be encouraged by His sovereign plan to save.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 17:1-9

1. What does Paul do in the city?
2. What are the two different responses to Paul's proclamation of Jesus?
3. Why do some of the Jews have such a violent reaction to Paul and Silas? How is that different to the accusation they bring before the city officials?

**Prayer:** Underneath loudly-voiced opposition to the gospel can be unspoken, personal reasons for people's rejection. Ultimately, these Jews rejected Jesus because they were jealous of the hearing and following Paul and Silas were getting. While people need to be reasoned with and persuaded of the truth, how we then respond to Jesus is a matter of the heart. Are you persuaded of the truth of the gospel? Do you truly own that you are sinful and lost, needing Jesus to save and lead you?

# WEEK 3 ACTS 16:6-17:15

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 17:10-15

1. What does Paul do in this city, Berea?
2. What response does the preaching of the gospel create?
3. By now you'd think Paul and Silas would just give up! Everywhere they go, they are met with opposition. Instead, they press on to the next city. What should we take away from their determination and commitment to preaching the gospel? How should this shape the way you live today?

**Prayer:** Thank God that He continues to save people, and ask Him to be rescuing people on the Central Coast. Ask that He would give you unwavering confidence in His purposes and plans.



# **PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES**

# WEEK 4 ACTS 17:16-18:23

**Paul's second missionary journey continues in Athens and Corinth.**

## DAY 1

**Read Acts 17:16-34**

1. What do you learn about the religious practices in Athens?
2. The worship of idols is everywhere in our Coastie culture too ... it's usually just a little more subtle. How does being a Christian shape the way you view things like holidays, material possessions, sex, work, food, surfing...?
3. What does Paul offer in his message to this people who worship what they don't even know?
4. In verses 29-31, how does the truth about the Creator God confront and challenge the Athenians?

**Prayer:** God will judge mankind for our improper worship. He is God and He alone. Have you repented of worshipping created things rather than the Creator? Praise God that He has provided a rescuer in Jesus! Ask God to help you hold Him in the highest regard, over and above all created things in this world.



# DAY 2

## Read Acts 17:22-34

1. From Paul's speech in verses 22-28, make a list of all the facts we learn about God.
2. This great Creator and Sustainer God will not go on being ignored by His creatures. What proof has God given that He will judge the world?
3. The message of Jesus' resurrection once again brings mixed responses. Yet, it is fact - grounded in history, testified to by eyewitnesses, and faithfully recorded for us in the Bible. How does the resurrection give you confidence in your faith today?

**Prayer.** Read 1 Peter 1:3-5 to be reminded of the great kindness of God to us through Jesus' resurrection. Thank God for His mercy and ask Him to give you great confidence in your inheritance.

# WEEK 4 ACTS 17:16-18:23

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 18:1-11

1. Once again ... what are the two responses to the gospel?
2. God is gracious, and some of the Corinthians are saved ... even Crispus the leader of the synagogue! But in city after city, place after place, the Jews abused Paul for his preaching of Jesus. How is Paul feeling at this point, and what does he decide to do?
3. What happens in verses 7-8 that show Paul's decision was a good one?

**Prayer:** Ephesians 3:6 says, "This mystery [of Christ] is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

The Jews' hardness of heart is devastating. But the inclusion of Gentiles into God's new family is an awesome and undeserved thing, something which we as Gentiles need to appreciate! Thank God for this grace, and ask Him to increase your love for Him today.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 18:9-23

1. What are the promises God makes to Paul in verse 10?
2. How do we see God's faithfulness to His promises in what happens next?
3. When Paul finally leaves Corinth (verse 18), it appears that there are many new brothers and sisters – the church in Corinth has been established! Here again is evidence of God's faithfulness and power. How is God's faithfulness and power a comfort for you today?

**Prayer:** The sovereignty (i.e. the complete power and control) of God is so important for our perseverance in hard times. God had many people in that city, and He was going to make sure they were saved! He even worked through the non-Christian authorities (Gallio) to make sure it would happen. Praise God for His sovereignty; God has people, and the people will become His! And ask Him (with great confidence) that He will keep saving people.

# WEEK 4 ACTS 17:16-18:23

## DAY 5

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5

1. What do we learn here about the Corinthians who came to faith in Jesus?
2. Why are the 'weak' and 'unwise' exactly the kind of people God wants to save?
3. How did Paul embody this humble dependence on God in his ministry to them? (2:1-5)

**Prayer:** Have you been humbled by the gospel? The Lord of the Universe had to die for us to be forgiven! If you are often proud, this truth should bring you back to earth; if you often feel weak and unimportant, it should lift you up and bring you great confidence in God's wisdom and power to save! Either way, let us be people who boast in the Lord, and the Lord alone. How can you pray about this today?



# **PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES**

# WEEK 5 ACTS 18:24-21:16

**We now come to Paul's third 'missionary journey', which will largely focus on his ministry in Ephesus. There he stayed over two years, such that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19:10).**

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 18:24-19:7

1. Apollos comes across as a passionate go-getter! He has clearly been empowered by the Spirit to speak the word of God boldly (verses 25-26; see 4:31), yet his understanding of the new Age of the Spirit is deficient. How do Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos in his ministry?
2. Paul then meets 12 men in Ephesus, whose understanding is much more seriously lacking. It seems they had not understood the gospel. What questions does Paul ask to find out their spiritual state?
3. Perceiving that they do not have faith in Jesus, and so have not received the Spirit, how does Paul proceed?
4. These men did not have the Spirit, but Paul's focus for them is Jesus. He preaches Jesus, he baptizes them in the name of Jesus, and subsequently they receive the Spirit of Jesus. How is today's passage a reminder of the centrality of Jesus to Christianity?

**Prayer:** "All spiritual deficiency is met by knowing and trusting in the Lord Jesus". Will Jesus be the centre of your life today? What can you do today to focus on Him? Pray about this. Also, praise God for the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit for believers. You can be confident that your petition to God is doable, because He has given you the Spirit to help you!

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 19:8-22

1. From verses 8-10, how is Paul persistent in his preaching, and what is the result?
2. Why were Jewish unbelievers invoking the name of Jesus, whom they didn't have faith in?
3. The power of God was clearly being seen by both believers and unbelievers. How did God use these events to bring Himself glory?

**Prayer.** Praise God for His power in using the sinful actions of men to bring about much good: the word of the Lord spread and some believers repented of sin! Pray about how these events can give you confidence in God's power to fulfill His plans in our situation in Australia.

# WEEK 5 ACTS 18:24-21:16

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 19:23-20:6

1. How did the gospel impact the business of the silversmiths and craftsmen?
2. In addition to the financial threat the gospel had become in Ephesus, what else was the gospel threatening – making the crowd react so fiercely?
3. Although Christianity in Ephesus meant the false god Artemis was being neglected and in 'danger' of being discredited, how did God keep His servants safe from the passionate Ephesian idolaters?

**Prayer.** The political powers had nothing to charge Paul with. How is he a good example to us of faithful ministry? Pray about how you could pursue evangelism in a respectful – yet firm and faithful – way to your friends, family and co-workers.



# DAY 4

Today we will look at 20:17-38, but it would be good for you to read 20:7-16 at some point too. These verses contain the last recorded miracle of Paul before he will suffer in Jerusalem through to Rome.

## Read Acts 20:17-38

1. How would you describe the tone of Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. This is the only speech of Paul's in Acts made exclusively to Christians. What can we learn about:
  - a. Paul's aim in life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. The role of church leadership?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How are you encouraged and challenged by Paul's love for his Ephesian brothers and sisters? What would it look like for you to love the people in your Growth Group and the people of EV Church the way Paul loves?

**Prayer.** Ask God to fill you with love for His people, and to be committed to their good: encouraging others to follow Jesus faithfully.

Can you, along with Paul, say that your life means nothing to you – that your only aim is to follow Jesus until the end, faithfully testifying to God's grace to those around you? What a challenge! How might you live more focused on Jesus today? Pray about these things.

# WEEK 5 ACTS 18:24-21:16

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 21:1-16

1. Today's passage records Paul resolutely travelling to Jerusalem. Why do people try to persuade him not to go?
2. Compare Acts 21:11-13 with Luke 18:31-34. What similarities between Paul and Jesus emerge? (These similarities will become a big theme in the rest of Acts)
3. How are you encouraged by Paul's determination and devotion to the Lord Jesus? What characteristics of Paul's might you attempt to imitate?

**Prayer.** Thank God for Paul's gospel-centred heart, and the example he is to us. Pray that you might also have the courage to suffer for Jesus if necessary. Pray that your main priority in life might be service of Jesus.



# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# WEEK 6 ACTS 21:17-23:35

This week's section of Acts focuses on Paul's time in Jerusalem. He had been warned by many that to go to Jerusalem would result in suffering (21:4, 11, 12). Paul, however, felt compelled go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome (see 19:21 and 20:22). Acts 24:17 also reports that he was bringing gifts for the poor in Jerusalem. For Paul's companions and friends, what would happen to him in this city was a cause for great concern, but the Lord would work sovereignly to protect his chosen instrument for the Gentiles.

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 21:17-26

1. What accusation is brought against Paul?
2. The Jewish Christians knew that it wasn't by keeping the law that they are saved; they accepted the Gentile believers without adherence to the law (verse 19-20 and 25). Yet they were distressed at the thought of Paul not keeping the law and of him teaching Jewish converts not to abide by it. What does this indicate about the Jewish Christians' transition from their previous religious practices into the new understanding of a religion of grace, not works?
3. The Jews wanted Paul to demonstrate his acceptance and participation in their long-standing cultural practices. What do they ask him to do and how does he respond?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:32-33. How do these words from Paul reflect his actions in Acts 21?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the example of Paul, and pray that you too would be selfless, sacrificing your own comforts for the good of many. How can you be serving others? With what sort of attitude and spirit will you serve others at church this week? Pray about these things.

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 21:27-36

1. What prompted the Jews' attempt to kill Paul?
2. How is it ironic (and tragic) that they think Paul is teaching against the Jewish people and their religion?
3. Who rescues Paul and why is this so ironic?

**Prayer:** Once again the Jews (God's chosen people!) are hostile to God's messenger, and Paul needs rescuing by Gentiles! This is a reminder that it is only by God's intervening work that any of us would be open to His word and His messengers. Thank God for His work in you to open your heart and mind to the gospel, and pray that you would never harden your heart.

# WEEK 6 ACTS 21:17-23:35

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 21:37-22:29

1. How would you describe the tone Paul uses to address the crowd?
  
2. The crowd seems to accept Paul's testimony until he mentions the Gentiles (chapter 22:21-22). What does this reveal about their hearts?
  
3. The pride of wanting to be the uniquely special people of God stops the crowd from hearing any more of Paul's testimony.
  - a. Does pride ever stop you from welcoming and accepting others?
  
  - b. Ephesians 2:3-5 says, "Like the rest [of mankind], we were by nature deserving wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression." What should the gospel do to our pride?

**Prayer.** Praise God for your unmerited salvation! Pray that His people at EV Church might humbly love and welcome others at church, and accept anyone who would put their faith in Jesus as a brother or sister.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 22:30-23:11

1. Read John 18:19-24. What parallels are there between the trials of Jesus and Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do both Jesus and Paul show courage and integrity in the face of unjust opposition?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. After being hit, and nearly torn in two, once again the Lord sovereignly rescues Paul through the Roman authorities, and then offers words of encouragement.
  - a. What reason does Paul have to endure?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. In Acts 1:8, Jesus promised the gospel would reach the ends of the earth. How is He using Paul to fulfill His plan?

**Prayer.** Praise God that He used Paul to take the gospel to the nations, and for Paul's courage to stand for the truth! It is because of the Lord's work through Paul that the gospel reached Rome and then the rest of the world... even Australia! Ask God for courage to stand for Jesus (like Paul did) even when it's tough.

# WEEK 6 ACTS 21:17-23:35

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 23:12-35

1. What plan is made against Paul?
2. Once again, how does God sovereignly work to rescue him from the plot against his life?
3. In Romans 15:31, writing to Christians in Rome just before he arrived in Jerusalem, Paul asks them to pray that God would rescue him from the hand of the unbelievers there. It seems in Acts 21-23 that God answered their prayers!
  - a. How is this an encouragement for us to come to God in prayer?
  - b. What does it show you about God's power to fulfill His plans (Acts 1:8)?

**Prayer.** Praise God for His power, for His sovereign rule, and for involving His people in His work through prayer! Ask God for a renewed energy to pray and depend on Him. Ask God to continue fulfilling His plans to save.





# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# WEEK 7 ACTS 24:1-26:32

Paul must continue defending himself before the courts; this time before Roman rulers – Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Time and time again his innocence is recognised, and yet he remains unjustly imprisoned, awaiting the next trial. Yet behind it all, the sovereign Lord works to fulfill his Word – “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome” (23:11).

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 24:1-27

1. Make a list of the charges brought against Paul (verses 5-6).
2. What points does Paul refute and what does he concede to?
3. Paul is not found guilty of any charges, but still ends up imprisoned for two years. Yet even here there is opportunity to share the gospel. What seems to be Felix’s response to the gospel? What evidence suggests that he remained uncovered?
4. It would have been easy for Paul to despair in this situation: imprisoned, and, although speaking God’s message, not seeing fruit. How would Jesus’ words in 23:11 comfort him?

**Prayer:** Even when things seem bleak, the Lord is in control. He had a plan for Paul, and He would bring it about. We don’t always understand why things happen as they do, but we can trust that God is good in His purposes and plans. Pray that God might help you remain trusting and resting in His goodness and sovereignty when being a Christian makes life difficult.

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 25:1-27

1. What do the following verses establish about Paul: Acts 23:29, 25:7, 25:25, and 26:31?
2. In 25:11, Paul was all but proven innocent, and yet he appeals to Caesar, prolonging his imprisonment and adding additional trials to his already long list! Why would he do this? (Hint: 23:11)
3. How is God's plan to send His servant Paul to Rome proving to be unstoppable?

**Prayer.** "To Caesar you will go!" Nothing can stop God's purposes and plans. How does the passage today give you confidence in the power of God? How's is Paul's perseverance and determination to serve God challenging for you today? Pray about these things.

# WEEK 7 ACTS 24:1-26:32

## DAY 3

**Paul's trials are meant to give us a feeling of 'déjà vu'. Hasn't this all happened before? A man on trial, continually declared innocent, yet treated as guilty...**

### Read Luke 23:1-25

1. What similarities do you notice in the respective trials of Jesus and Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Jesus, as with Paul, was treated unjustly. The Lord Jesus was sentenced to die a death He did not deserve. How does God use this evil for good? (See Luke 24:45-47)

**Prayer:** God is always in control and always working to achieve His purposes. Although Jesus is condemned, God uses it to redeem humanity. Although Paul is unjustly imprisoned and tried, God uses it to deliver the message of redemption to Rome. Are there times when you are treated unfairly because you are being faithful to God? How does this encourage you to trust God in these circumstances? Praise God for His power to work for good, even through the bad. Thank Him for fulfilling in plans to save, and ask Him to help you trust in Him when you're treated unfairly.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 26:1-32

1. In today's passage Paul stands on trial as an accused man. What is, therefore, strange about his defence? What seems to be his main concern?
2. What outcome is Paul hoping for? (Verses 27-29)
3. How is Paul's boldness and concern for his hearers a challenge to you in your speaking about Jesus? Is your concern more for your own comfort or, like Paul, for the salvation of the lost?
4. What convictions drive Paul's bold evangelising of King Agrippa? Do you share these convictions?

**Prayer.** Paul is a great example and challenge! How does your thinking about the resurrection of Jesus and the truth of the Scriptures shape you? Pray that you would have unwavering confidence in God's word about His Son, and that you would be bold in speaking about Him.

Do you still have doubts or questions about the truth of the Bible's message? Perhaps you could write them down and ask somebody at church or at Growth Group about them.

# WEEK 7 ACTS 24:1-26:32

## DAY 5

**“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” Paul’s boldness in his speech to King Agrippa is fueled by a strong conviction about the truth of Jesus’ resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 reveals more of his understanding about the resurrection.**

### Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

1. What would it mean for Paul and his ministry if there was no resurrection? (Verses 13-16)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Along with all Paul’s labour and preaching being in vain, what would it mean for Christians if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead? (Verse 17)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Paul is convinced of the resurrection of Jesus (verse 20, see verses 3-8). From what we’ve seen in Acts, how does this conviction shape Paul? How does it keep him going when he’s being mistreated for the gospel?

**Prayer:** In testifying to the resurrection of Jesus, Paul states, “What I am saying is true and reasonable” (Acts 26:22-25). His confidence in the resurrection is unswerving! Do you have this same confidence? How has the resurrection of Jesus shaped you, and how will it shape your life today? Pray about these things, and thank God for the resurrection of Jesus— because of it, we are no longer dead in our sins!



# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# WEEK 8 ACTS 27:1-28:16

Almost one third of the book of Acts is given to recording Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome (chapters 19-28). This week we will finally see him arrive, although not without more hardship, and a new kind of opposition – that of natural catastrophe. The introduction in Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us why he was so eager to get to Rome.

## DAY 1

### Read Romans 1:8-15

1. How would you describe Paul's heart for those in Rome?
2. Why does he desire to see them? (Verses 11-15)
3. What can you learn about Paul's character, convictions, and priorities from his eagerness to preach the gospel to them? How can Paul be an example to you?

**Prayer:** Pray that you might follow Paul's example of a Christ-centred mind, heart and lifestyle. Ask that God might shape you in these areas, filling you with love and an eagerness to serve for the spiritual good of others.



# DAY 2

## Read Acts 27:1-26

1. In verses 7-12 what phrases and words does Luke use that suggest danger is coming?
2. How would have the men on the boat been feeling and thinking during the storm? (Verses 18-20)
3. On what grounds does Paul urge the men to keep up their courage, and why do they listen to him now when they previously ignored him?
4. The angel instructs Paul "Do not be afraid ... you must stand trial before Caesar" (verse 24). How is the power of God to fulfill His plans shown to be stronger than the power of nature?

**Prayer.** Praise God for His kindness to Paul, for His power to fulfill His purposes, and His faithfulness to His word! This is a God who can be trusted. Do you have anxieties and worries which you need to bring to God? Pray about these, and ask God to help you rest in His goodness, His power and His faithfulness to and love and keep you.

# WEEK 8 ACTS 27:1-28:16

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 27:27-44

1. In 27:24, God promised that Paul and all the others would survive. At what points does this seem unlikely?
2. Three times in this passage the men are saved, and each time Paul is involved. In what sense has Paul become their saviour? (See verses 31-32, 34-35, and 42-43.)
3. How has the centurion's attitude to Paul changed since verses 10-11, and what has brought about this change?
4. Paul's trust in God has made him not only the messenger of eternal salvation in the gospel, but also the messenger of salvation from death in the storm. God is the ruler in this storm, and to trust in Him and through his messenger meant safety. How is this a picture of how we are spiritually saved?

**Prayer.** The Sovereign Lord is a God of kindness and mercy! Praise Him for His saving power, and for the salvation you have in Jesus. Thank God for those who shared the gospel with you so that you believed and were saved.

# DAY 4

## Read Acts 27:21-26

1. Three times in Acts, when the Apostle Paul is in trouble, he receives a direct word from God. Read Acts 18:9-10, 23:11, and 27:23-24. What is similar each time God spoke to Paul?
2. What do these words of encouragement reveal about:
  - a. God's character?
  - b. God's power?
3. Like Paul, we too can listen to God speak to us in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16 – "All scripture is God-breathed"), and, like Paul, we too can be encouraged by God's kindness and His power to fulfill His promises. What are some of God's promises to us in scripture that encourage and comfort you in hard times?

**Prayer.** Praise God for His promises to us in His Word, and pray for a great dependence on His Word in all of life. Ask for courage to trust and obey our gracious and sovereign Lord.

# WEEK 8 ACTS 27:1-28:16

## DAY 5

### Read Acts 28:1-16

1. What particularly unusual events take place in this passage?
2. There is an allusion here to Luke 10, where Jesus sent out messengers to declare that the Kingdom of God had come near. They were given power to heal the sick and to trample snakes! If this is happening for Paul here, what does it say about him?
3. As Jesus' representative, how does the fate of Rome rest in Paul's hands?
4. How we respond to those teaching God's Word (faithfully!) often reveals our heart towards God Himself. How do you respond to the teaching of God's Word when it challenges your views, practices and habits? What does your response reveal about your heart?

**Prayer:** Thank God that the gospel reached Rome, and so would spread from there to the ends of the earth! Ask Him to make you discerning when being taught the Word, but also to help you receive the Word of God with humility and gentleness.



# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# WEEK 9 ACTS 28:17-31

## DAY 1

### Read Acts 28:17-31

1. Paul has finally arrived in Rome. How do these words from 'Amazing Grace' describe Paul's journey:

*"Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.*

*'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."*

2. What does Paul do once he's settled in Rome? (Verse 23)
3. 'Nothing proves the sincerity of our beliefs like our willingness to suffer for them'. If this sentiment is true, what does Paul's preaching immediately after his long, hard journey say about his beliefs?
4. Have you ever had to suffer for your beliefs? How do you respond when faced with opposition for the sake of Christ, and what does that say about your faith?

**Prayer:** Praise God for the faithful example of Paul. Ask the Lord to help you bear up under opposition, and so prove your faith as genuine. Pray for strength, courage, and a deep confidence in your salvation.

# DAY 2

## Read Acts 28:17-31

1. “...first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Romans 1:16). How does Paul uphold this statement once he arrives in Rome?
2. How do the Jews in Rome respond to the gospel? (Verses 24-25)
3. Paul quotes a passage from Isaiah 6. What explanation does the quote offer for the Jews’ rejection of the gospel?
4. What does Paul (once again!) conclude in verse 28? What hope still remains despite the Jew’s rejection of Jesus?

**Prayer:** The hope that we Gentiles have in Christ should make us so tremendously thankful! It can be hard to understand the significance of the Gentiles’ inclusion in the spiritual family of God ... but it was such a massive shift in human history; one that God had been planning from the beginning. Are you thankful for your salvation today? Praise God for His kindness to you, and ask for an unshakeable joy in your salvation!

# WEEK 9 ACTS 28:17-31

## DAY 3

### Read Acts 1:8

1. How have Jesus' words been fulfilled so far through Acts?
2. A Roman Historian, Tacitus, who wrote during the 1st and 2nd century, said this about the spread of Christianity:  
*"The deadly superstition (Christianity)... broke out afresh not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but also in the City of Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world meet and become popular."*  
According to Tacitus, why is Rome important to the spread of Christianity throughout the world?
3. Rome was the Gentile Capital of the ancient world. In what sense is Paul reaching Rome the fulfillment of the gospel reaching 'the ends of the earth'?
4. Read Acts 28:30-31. How do these verses also indicate that the gospel will continue to spread and flourish throughout the world?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the spread of the gospel, which since arriving at Rome has spread throughout the world, to every continent, and even to the Central Coast, Australia! Pray the gospel will continue to bear fruit throughout the world. Pray for a revival and a great turning of sinners to Jesus.



# DAY 4

## Read Matthew 28:16-20

1. What task does Jesus give His disciples to do now that He has received all authority on heaven and earth? (Verse 19-20)
  
2. Jesus offers the comforting words that He will be with them as they go about making obedient disciples of all nations – to the very end of the age. How long will this mission last, and what does that mean for us today?
  
3. In Acts 28:31, Paul preaches with all boldness and without hindrance. What does this imply about the future of the gospel after the end of Acts 28?

**Prayer:** Jesus' work through the Apostles in the 1st century continues to this day, through His church and through His followers. The mission to make disciples of all nations did not finish with Acts; it will continue "to the very end of the age!" How are you using your life for this mission? Are there changes you need to make in your week to be more on about what God is on about? Pray about these things. Praise God that we have given a task that will matter for all eternity.

# WEEK 9 ACTS 28:17-31

## DAY 5

We will finish our series today by looking at a Psalm written by David many centuries before the birth of Jesus. Although in its original context, it referred to the life of David, the Psalm finds a greater fulfillment in Jesus, with His death, resurrection, and the impact these would have on all the earth.

### Read Psalm 22

1. How does this Psalm capture what would happen to Jesus on the cross? (See especially verses 1, 7, 8, 14-18)
2. The tone seems to shift in verse 19. What help does the suffering one plead for, and what seems to be the answer? (Verse 24)
3. Although the man in this Psalm (ultimately, Jesus) suffered terribly, the Lord listens to his cry for help, and a 'great assembly' is gathered that praises his name! (Verse 24-25). Looking at verses 27-28, who is implied to be part of this assembly?

**Prayer:** "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him..." (Psalm 22:27)

The message of Jesus is a message for all the earth, and this is God's unstoppable plan. Take some time to consider the great kindness and love that God has displayed to you in bringing this message to you personally. Also, consider how you may be a part of His great plan to take this message to the ends of the earth. Spend time praying and giving thanks about these things. If you have been challenged to start serving in a new way, or to change something in your life, perhaps you could tell someone in your Growth Group and you could pray together about this.

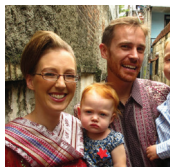


# PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

# NOTES



# EV MISSION PARTNERS



## **Derek and Anna - Southeast Asia (OMF)**

Derek and Anna (Liam, Jasmine and Juliet) are currently now back in Southeast Asia and settling in well. Derek teaches in a local college, training workers who will go back to their towns as leaders bringing the message to those with whom they live. They are also involved in reaching out the community where they live.



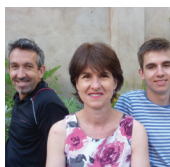
## **Colin and Jill Bakon - SIM: Latin American Ministry**

Colin trains and mentors Christians in Latin America to mobilise their churches through Kairos. He has a new role with SIM International working with a team to help refocus the mission into Unreached People Groups. Pray for wisdom and understanding in this new role.



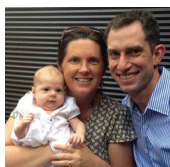
## **Kirstin Hawkshaw - CMS Missionary in Nepal**

Kirstin works as an Occupational Therapist in Pokhara, Nepal seeking to be salt and light as she trains locals and cares for people with disabilities through a community rehabilitation program. She is praying for many more opportunities through church, work and life to be a witness to Jesus and to be discipling Christians in the relatively young-though-vibrant church of Nepal.



## **Paul and Sandra King - Strasbourg, France (CMS)**

Paul and Sandra serve France in university and church ministry in Strasbourg. They serve with French Christians in the University Bible Group (GBU). Their ministry with uni students involves evangelism, discipling, and training students to teach the Bible. They are now helping in a coffee shop ministry, a new outreach opportunity through their local church.



## **Martin and Jen Shadwick - AFES Newcastle Uni**

Martin and Jen work full time with AFES at Newcastle Uni, engaging in evangelism as well as discipling and training Christian students. Martin leads the AFES staff team who work with both local and overseas students, and a ministry to Muslim students. Pray for wisdom in balancing ministry and family life and for new partners to help them continue in this important ministry.

## **Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches**

A fellowship of independent churches and pastors across Australia. These churches are committed to praying for one another and continuing to promote planting of evangelical churches throughout Australia. Their pastors seek to provide support and encouragement to one another. FIEC is aiming, with God's help, to plant 100 churches across Australia during the next 15 years.



Find out more: [evchurch.info/missionpartners](http://evchurch.info/missionpartners)



### **Jono and Amy Vink - Tanzania (CMS)**

Jono and Amy, along with their children are working in Musoma, Tanzania. Jono trains church leaders, grounding them in Biblical theology and in practical exegetical skills at Bunda Bible College equipping local pastors to teach the Bible and lead God's people. Amy works with local women through "Rehema" which is an income generating project – café and crafts, seeking to train them to be able to provide for their families as well as all profits going to helping other needy women and children.



### **Jono and Grace Wright - AIM**

Jono and Grace Wright, with their kids, are working amongst Aborigines in Camooweal and the surrounding communities along the Sandover Highway. They are with Australian Indigenous Ministries (AIM). Their ministries include preaching at Sunday meetings, weekly Bible study groups, weekly prayer meetings, Sunday School, Scripture in the local primary school, weekend Bible schools and also an itinerant ministry.



### **The Geneva Push**

Geneva Push is an Australian Church Planting Network aiming to inspire, equip and unleash a new generation of church planters dedicated to evangelising churches into existence. It has set in place a high quality assessment process and provides ongoing support and training through coaching structures, mentoring and ongoing conferences to ensure the biggest impact as planters.



### **Liam and Lucy Doyle - Lake Mac Church**

Liam and Lucy Doyle head up the church plant in Lake Macquarie and are now mentored through the Geneva program. There is a great range of ages, and despite differences like age, education and nationality, they enjoy a real sense of warmth, friendship and love as they hear God's word together and help each other follow Jesus. Pray for a good mentor relationship with Dave Sheath from Lakes Evangelical Church.



### **Jai and Jay-Ellen Wright - MAKE Church, Mackay**

Jai and Jay-Ellen, with their four children, Amber, Ebony and Kade and little Jett are planting the MAKE church in Mackay. This year will see the development of a team of leaders, and they ask for prayer as they prepare the members to serve in leadership.

#### **GIVING AT EV CHURCH**

The New Testament teaches us to give generously, regularly and joyfully. Please join with us in bringing solid hope to the coast – Jesus.

More info on giving & account details: [evchurch.info/giving](http://evchurch.info/giving)

