

THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

STUDIES IN
ACTS 13-22



TOONGABBIE
ANGLICAN
CHURCH



OVERVIEW

WEEK STARTING	SERMON	STUDY
18 FEB	13:13-52	1 12:25 - 13:52
25 FEB	14:1-20	2 14:1-28
3 MAR	15:1-21	3 15:1-35
10 MAR	16:11-40	4 16:11 - 17:15
17 MAR	17:16-34	5 17:16-34
24 MAR	18:1-17	6 20:13-38
7 APR	19:1-22	7 21:27 - 23:11

STUDY 1 - ACTS 12:25-13:52



Big Idea

Jesus is God's Saviour for all of humanity, so nothing matters more than your response to him.



Read Acts 1:8 together



Growth Group Leader's blurb to the group

"The Book of Acts is all about God's Spirit-empowered gospel going out to the world. By chapter 13, much of Jesus' words in 1:8 have been fulfilled: The Apostles have taken to gospel to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and now the gospel has begun to go to the Gentiles. Now, in this second half of Acts, the Apostle Paul now takes the lead in proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles, and to the ends of the earth..."



Read Acts 12:25-13:12

1. Looking at 13:1-12, what events take place? (Together do a quick step-by-step summary).

2. So Barnabas and Saul have been sent on their mission, and we get an account of their ministry in Paphos. Let's do a quick character-profile for both Bar-Jesus and Sergius Paulus: What information are we told about these two men?

3. Why is it significant that Sergius Paulus is converted, and Bar-Jesus is not?

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- a. How do their names help highlight this significance?
 - b. How does Saul's adoption of his Greek name 'Paul' also add weight to this event?



Read Acts 13:13-52

4. Let's assess the situation together. Looking at verses 13-16, what can we learn about 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when'?
5. In pairs, take a few minutes to come up with a one-sentence summary of Paul's sermon. Share your answers.
6. How did Paul try to convince his hearers that Jesus is the promised Saviour?
7. What is the 'application' of this sermon? What does Paul want his hearers to *do* in light of what he has just said?
8. How does this apply to us today?
 - a. If one of us were to have doubts about the truth of the gospel & the Bible's message, how might we go about addressing them?

9. The Jews' initial response to Paul's sermon is positive, but it quickly takes a tragic turn... How do the Jews and the Gentiles respond differently to the Word of God, and how is this a fulfillment of Scripture?

10. Thinking back to the conversion of Sergius-Paulus and judgment of Bar-Jesus... how was that a sign of things to come?

11. In 14:22 Paul says, "We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God". What hardships do Paul and Barnabas go through as a result of their preaching in chapter 13?

12. When you became a Christian did you know that Christian life would include many hardships?

a. Would you say you have realistic expectations about the Christian life?



Things to pray about

In this chapter both the blessing and the bite that comes with the gospel are seen: We Gentiles can now be saved – forgiven – justified before God! But faithfulness to the gospel will bring hardship.

13. How have you been encouraged by what you have in Christ? Praise God for this.

14. In what contexts do you find it hard to be a follower of Christ? Pray for the strength to be faithful to Jesus even when it's difficult – remembering the truth of the gospel and the great salvation we have!

STUDY 2 - ACTS 14:1-28



Big Idea

The gospel is going forth, bringing some to joyful salvation in Christ and others to angry enmity with the Christians. God is not just saving individuals, but building a church, and we see that as Paul & Barnabas return to the city where they were beaten and left for dead!

GETTING STARTED



Look back at Acts 7:51 – 8:1

1. Who are the main characters in this event and where do they stand (ideologically, not literally)?

2. What do you think Saul believes?



Read Acts 14:1-20

3. As we come to Iconium, we see Saul (now Paul) has switched sides. As he and Barnabas preach, what are the dynamics at play? What are each of the characters 'doing'?

a. Paul & Barnabas

b. Jews

c. Greeks

d. God

4. What happens at Lystra? How is this similar / different to Iconium?

5. What misunderstanding do the people of Lystra have about Barnabas and Paul? How did they reach that conclusion?

6. How do Paul & Barnabas respond? Sketch out their argument to the Lystrans.

7. How do they treat the misunderstanding?

8. What do you expect will happen for the Christians at Lystra now that Paul & Barnabas have left?



Read Acts 14:21-28

9. Paul & Barnabas return to Lystra! Why? What is important to them?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE AND PRAYING IT THROUGH

10. What does this chapter show you about Paul's journey as a disciple?

11. What does this chapter show you about God's church?

12. What does this chapter show you about those outside the church?

13. Are any of these ^ ideas at odd with how you view these things yourself? (Or how you view yourself from God's perspective?!)

14. Pray through these things.

STUDY 3 - ACTS 15:1-35



Big Idea

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, for all people.

GETTING STARTED



Someone in church says this to you: “In order to be right with God you need to trust in Jesus and keep the 10 commandments”. How do you respond?



Read Acts 15:1-35

1. Looking at 15:1-35, what events take place? (Together do a quick step-by-step summary of the chapter).
2. What issue is raised in Antioch and what is the response of the church there?
 - a. Why are Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem?
3. In Jerusalem, the Christian Pharisees weren't dismissing the Gentiles altogether, but they were demanding they keep some Old Testament commands. How was that undermining the very foundations of the Christian faith?
4. In verses 6-18, what evidence and arguments do the apostles give to show that God accepts of Gentiles? (Perhaps work in pairs or trios for this question, and share answers at the end)

5. So, in summary, what conclusion do the apostles come to regarding the Gentiles and what they must do to be saved?

6. In Vs. 19-21, what instructions does James advise the leaders give to the Gentiles in Antioch?

7. If they had just established that they aren't saved by law keeping but by grace, why do they give these instructions?

a. What reason is given in Vs. 21?

b. How could it have been unhelpful to have Gentiles eating unclean foods in front of Jews? How might they have responded?

Let's look at 2 more passages to shed some light on this...



Read Romans 14:13-21

c. If all foods are clean, why might someone avoid eating some foods according to this passage?



Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

d. What place does the law have in Paul's life now that he is a Christian?

8. Back to Acts 15; how does the church in Antioch respond to their letter?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

9. Some differences among Christians and among churches are minor. Others are greatly significant... What issue/topic have we seen today that is worth dividing over?

10. Say you had to look for a new church to join. What are the essentials a church should have?

11. In our context, no one is really saying we must be circumcised to be saved. But we can all easily fall back into law-keeping. What things are we tempted to add to the gospel?



Things to pray about

- Pray we would be clear on the gospel of grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, and that we would never lose the gospel
- Repent of ways you have been legalistic; ask God to help you be more gentle with people
- Thank God that we have been rescued from law-keeping, and praise him that we gentiles have been brought into his family

STUDY 4 - ACTS 16:11-17:15



Big Idea

The gospel creates two kinds of fruit – belief and opposition.

GETTING STARTED



Thinking about times you've spoken to your friends about Jesus, have you had mainly positive or negative experiences?



Growth Group Leader's blurb to the group

"In the last few chapters of Acts Paul took the gospel throughout Asia. In this chapter the gospel goes to Europe (Macedonia) for the first time."



Read Acts 16:11-17:15

1. Divide into 3 groups – each taking one of the 3 cities from the passage. What are the different responses to the gospel in each city? *(After 5 mins get each group is to share their answers with the whole group)*

- Philippi – 16:11-40 (this group will have to work quickly!)
- Thessalonica – 17:1-9
- Berea – 17:10-15

Let's now zoom in on 3 prominent characters from Philippi (chapter 16).

Lydia

2. What do we learn about Lydia?
 - a. How does the gospel shape her?
 - b. How is she a good example for us?

The Slave Girl

3. What do we learn about the slave girl and her owners?

The Jailer

4. What do we learn about the jailer?
 - a. It looks like the gospel has come to a dead end with Paul and Silas now locked up. What happens that shows that this is not the case?
 - b. What does the earthquake demonstrate about God's intention for the gospel?
 - c. How did God use it to bring about salvation?
5. What are the different reasons people are hostile to the ministry of Paul & Silas?

6. How does that shape the way we think about evangelism?

7. How is the power of the gospel seen in this chunk of Acts?

a. How is the gospel seen to be for all kinds of people?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

8. The gospel creates two kinds of responses...belief and opposition. How does this help you appreciate your own salvation?

9. How do you respond to opposition or hostility when speaking about Christian things?

10. What does this passage teach us about the power of the gospel?



Things to pray about

- Praise God for his intention to save people, and for saving a people in Toongabbie
- Pray for a going confidence in the power of the gospel to save
- Pray for boldness in speaking to your friends about Jesus
- Pray for other things going on in each other's lives

STUDY 5 - ACTS 17:16-34



Big Idea

God, and God alone, is God.

GETTING STARTED



What does it mean to worship?

1. From the last few chapters in Acts, what have been the responses to the gospel so far?



Read Acts 17:16-34

2. In one or two sentences, what are the basic events that happen in this passage?

3. From verses 16-23, what can we learn about Athens at this time? (the people, culture, religion?)

4. How would you describe the tone / vibe / emotion of this passage?

5. What is idolatry? What did their idolatry look like in Athens?

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- a. Read Romans 1:18-24. How does idolatry make us foolish?
 - b. What is God's response to false worship and idolatry?
 - c. What does idolatry look like today in Toongabbie?
6. Back to Acts 17... Looking at Paul's speech in vs. 22-29, make a list of all the facts we learn about God. (Perhaps do this in pairs or trios).
- a. What stands out to you in Paul's speech?
7. Paul argues that God can't be found in images made by humans. How does he arrive at this conclusion? What is his line of thinking?
8. What is the bottom line for Paul's hearers? (What is Paul's conclusion?)
9. How is Jesus hugely significant in Paul's conclusion?

PRAYER & APPLICATION

- How should this passage shape the way we think about God, ourselves, and the world?
- God commands everyone to repent of false worship. What are you most tempted to worship instead of God?

Share and pray about these things.

STUDY 6 - ACTS 20:13-38



Big Idea

Heading for Jerusalem, Paul prepares the church for his absence, urging the leaders to nurture and protect the flock in the gospel.

GETTING STARTED



What are some common ways people might finish this sentence: “My goal in life is to...”



Recap so far

- What have we seen so far in Acts?
- What’s been the overarching message?
- Who have the major characters been?
- Where has Paul been recently? Where is he now?



Read Acts 20:13-21:16

1. What are the different things that happen in this passage?

2. What are the different things / different topics covered in Paul’s speech?

Lots can be learned about *Paul’s life* and his *thinking about life* from this passage. In smaller groups, work through the passage and fill out the table on the next page - taking note of how Paul acted and how Paul commands the elders to act. Share your findings at the end.

How Paul acted	How Paul commands them to act

3. We will talk about Paul's values next, but from what we've just looked at - what words would you use to describe Paul?

4. Let's now consider what Paul valued. Using the second table, we will look at 4 categories: Service, Teaching and Doctrine, His own life, and Other people. There are 2 things to consider for each category:

- Did Paul value this highly or lowly?
- Why did he value it in this way?



WHAT PAUL VALUES		
Category	High / Low?	Why does he value it this way?
SERVICE		
TEACHING & DOCTRINE		
HIS OWN LIFE		
OTHER PEOPLE		

PRAYERFULLY APPLYING IT

5. How do you find these a challenge? Are there any in particular that you think you can be imitating Paul as he imitates Jesus (1 Cor 11:1) in these ways? Go through each of them.

6. Are there things in your life – even good things – that you value too highly when stacked up against the gospel?

7. What can we be doing to help each other as brothers and sisters to be working on growing becoming more like Paul?

STUDY 7 - ACTS 21:27–23:11



Big Idea

The Gospel is Unstoppable! God protects His chosen servant, Paul, so the gospel will reach Rome.



Context

Paul has a conviction that he must go to Jerusalem and then onto Rome. Rome is about as far west as you could go, so here we see the gospel going to the ends of the earth. However not without some trials...

GETTING STARTED

1. From last week's passage what was Paul warned that he would face in Jerusalem? (Acts 20:23, 21:4, 21:10-14)

2. Has there been a time where you have had to face a trial or suffered for being a Christian?



Growth Group Leader's blurb to the group

"This week's passage will take us through three accounts of Paul being rescued from a trial."

PAUL'S FIRST RESCUE



Read Acts 21:27-36

3. If you were an on-looker to this event, how would you describe what you saw to a friend?

4. What accusations do the Jews make against Paul, and are they correct?

5. Who is trying to kill Paul and who ends up rescuing him?

a. What is ironic about this?



Read Acts 21:37 - 22:21

6. What are the main points Paul makes in his defense to the Jews?

7. Paul emphasizes his Jewishness in his speech. Why was it helpful for them to hear this?

PAUL'S SECOND RESCUE



Read Acts 22:22-29

8. What causes this second uproar among the Jews?

9. What are we meant to notice about who it is that is against Paul, and who it is that rescues him?

10. We are left asking the question “Will God’s plan for the gospel to go to Rome fail, and be stopped here in Jerusalem?”... If you were Paul how do you think you would be feeling at this point in time?

PAUL’S THIRD RESCUE



Read Acts 22:30 – 23:11

(We’re going to move really quickly through this last bit)

11. Once again we see Paul needing to be rescued, who rescues him this time?

12. Following the violence of the last two days this passage finishes with a comfort for Paul, what is it?

13. What do Jesus’ words reveal about God’s big purpose through all of this?

14. How have we seen God be faithful to this plan throughout these chapters?

APPLICATION AND PRAYER

We see really clearly from this passage that nothing will stop God's plan to take the gospel to the nations, so that people will be saved.

15. Do you ever feel like we're fighting a losing battle in our efforts to see our friends and family come to Christ?

16. How should this give you confidence that God will save people in Toongabbie?

The reason we have heard the gospel is because God rescued Paul through these attacks in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Praise and thank God for his kindness to us through the Apostle Paul!

17. How are you partnering in the work of the gospel going out to all nations?

Pray about these things.