







TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

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TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

THE STORY OF GOD'S GRACE FLOODING OUT INTO THE WORLD

At the end of last year, we worked through the first half of Acts. We saw many stories of God's grace flooding out into the world, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. There were many images of God working through his Gospel--working to draw unexpected people to himself, often through surprising and unexpected means. We saw how the whole world was being reshaped around Jesus, and by his boundless Gospel.

This term, we'll be journeying through the second half of Acts. The vibe is a little different in the second half of the book--the narrative slows down a bit, and it focuses in on the lives and ministries of a few individuals, with Paul taking up the greatest focus. There will be many travels (feel free to try and track their movements on the map), a lot of imprisonments and trials for the Apostles, many churches built, and a background to a lot of the letters of the New Testament. Along the journey we get some fascinating insights into Paul and the Apostles, and what it looks like for the Gospel to come to many different cultures and contexts. This is one of the main themes of the book: How the Gospel gives life to every people and culture in history-challenging, encouraging, and confronting each at different points. What it looks like to come to Jewish leaders looks very different to what it looks like to come to a city full of idols and unknown gods. But throughout the book, we see what it looks like for the Gospel to continue flooding out, reaching the world with the life-changing Word.

II It's our prayer that this series will give us hope, that by the power of God's Spirit the Gospel can speak into any culture with the power and life of Christ's death and resurrection.

In a world filled with much confusion and hostility towards the Gospel, we see it journey deeper and deeper into the heart of the biggest superpower in the world at the time: Ancient Rome, the ends of the earth. For us today, as people living in a complex, multicultural world, with many different levels of understanding and acceptance for the Gospel, it's our prayer that this series will give us hope, that the Gospel is never crushed, and that by the power of God's Spirit it can speak into any culture with the power and life of Christ's death and resurrection.



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WEEK 1 UNSTOPPABLE

Acts 11:19-12:25

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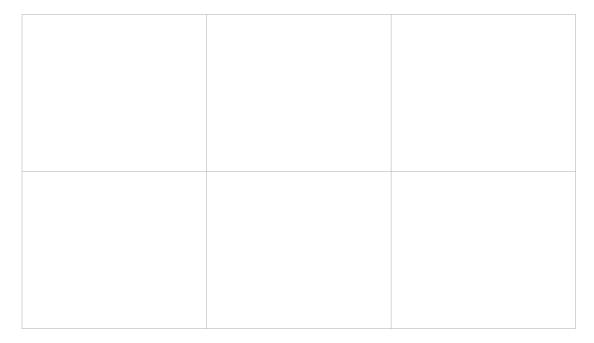
The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison, and Herod triumphing; it closes with Herod dead, Peter free, and the Word of God triumphing."

Read Acts 12:1-24.

What do we learn about Herod in the first four verses?

What is the church doing in response to this pressure against them?

Draw a comic strip showing the events of verses 5 to 18:



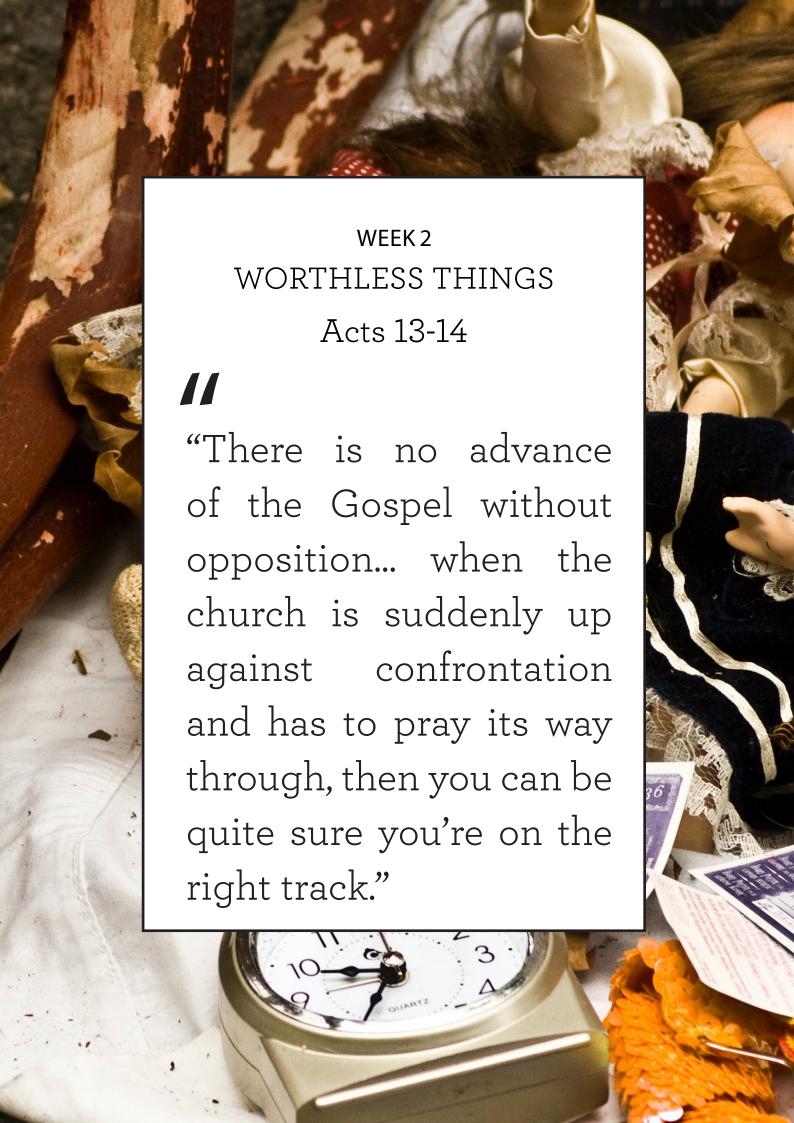
We see a lot of angels in this chapter. Where do we see them? Do you think there's a significance to that?

What does this chapter teach us about the power of prayer?

Acts 12:12-16 shows us a scene where prayer is answered, but the pray-ers find it unbelievable. When do you personally find it the most difficult to believe in the power of prayer?

What's the death of Herod meant to teach us?

When the angel was rescuing Peter, he was sleepy and groggy and thought he may have been dreaming. Have you ever seen God's kindness to you when you were barely aware of what was happening?



Read Acts 14:8-28.

Does this opening scene feel familiar to you? (Check out Acts 3:1-10? Luke 5:17-26?)

What are the "worthless things" (v. 15) that Paul and Barnabas are warning the people against?

How do Paul and Barnabas try to persuade the non-Jewish crowds of God's goodness, from verses 15-17?

What are some sim	ilar ways that peo	ple can see the	goodness of
God today?			

From verses 21-28, how do Paul and Barnabas try to reach new believers? How do they strengthen existing believers?

Do you find it easier to do one more than the other?

Is 14:22 more of an encouragement to you, or a worry for you?

Are you going through any hardships that this chapter speaks into at the moment? How does the Gospel give you hope in the face of that?

WEEK 3 SAVED BY GRACE Acts 15

11

We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are."

Does God treat everyone the same?

Read 15:1-21.

Read 15:5. Why was this issue so important to these Jewish leaders?

How were people in the Old Testament saved? (15:11) Do you find that surprising?

If good works don't save us or keep us saved, why should we be motivated to do anything good?

James closes the debate pretty sharply. What's the ultimate proof that he gives them? (verses 15-18)

Read Galatians 5:1-6. How do the verses in Galatians help us to understand what's happening in Acts 15?

What are some ways that we can place unhelpful expectations on what a proper Christian should and shouldn't look like?

How does God's grace speak into those expectations?

WEEK 4 SHINE LIKE STARS

Acts 16

The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He escorted them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

What changes from 16:9 to 16:10. What do you think that means?

Read 16:11-40.

In this section, we hear the stories of three people being led to salvation from very different life situations. What are the barriers for them coming to faith, and what signs do we get of God's work in their life?

arriers to Salvation	Signs of God's Work
	arriers to Salvation

Think back to last week, in Acts 15. How has the presentation of the Gospel changed between then and now?

What persuades the jailer that Paul and Silas have salvation to offer?

In 16:27-28, Paul and Silas were freed from prison, but stayed to save the man who had been keeping them in chains. Why did they do that?

Is there a difficult relationship in your life, where you feel that God is nonetheless calling you to stay close for the sake of that person's salvation?

There can be a real fear for our non-Christian friends that becoming a Christian might involve all sorts of loss – relationships, certain levels of comfort or freedom, respect. How can we be sensitive to these fears? How can we practically support our friends who are exploring Christianity?

