

Power Moves

Diverse Expressions of the Power of God The Empowered Church Series - Part 22

Acts 12:1-25
July 15-16, 2023

Introduction

- **God's Ways are Hard to Track** – and they rarely go the way we think they should go. Why? Different priorities and perspectives.
 - **Different goals = different paths** – if you and I were given individual maps with X marking the spot but rarely came into contact with each other during the race, **how likely is it that our X's are placed in the same place on both of our maps?** Not likely. If you have a different goal or end expectation, then you need to take different paths to get there.
 - **God's Goals** – God's goals seem to be **Kingdom** advancement, **Glory** to His name and **holistic health and blessing** for His children.
 - **Our Goals** – our goals seem to be **avoiding difficulty**, **wanting good stuff**, and **getting all the attention** from only certain people we select. In the end, we want enjoyable lives here on earth.
 - **Those sound similar but are they?**
- **Life is Complicated** – Even beyond God's or our intentional plans. Right? Good stuff happens, bad stuff happens. It kinda feels pretty random at times. But **sometimes we run into significant difficulty. In those moments we wonder if God exists and if He is a good God why did He let this happen.** It's when our faith hits the pavement.
- **Are we left to Randomness?** – so, are we left to randomness? Are we subject only to the whims of fortune? **No. It doesn't matter if you are a Christian or not. God is not an absentee landlord.** He may not like how things are going any more than we do, but He certainly isn't going to leave trash on His property.
- **How many terrible things in your life turned out for good later on? How many of you found the Lord during a terribly difficult time in your life?**
 - Explaining **Romans 8:28** – *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*
 - **What it does and doesn't say** – **It doesn't say that all things are good. It doesn't say all things start as good. It doesn't say only good things happen to Christians. It doesn't say you always get back what you lost. It says, God is brilliant, and creative, and He knows how create extraordinary things from trash and pain.**
 - **God handles complication** - No matter how messy or complicated a situation is, God is a thousand times ahead of it in terms of anticipating and preparing for it. Some things He causes directly, and some things are the results of being broken people in a broken world. But here's the thing: He's not broken and He isn't stuck here. His vantage point is from heaven and outside of TIME. **He knows...and He knows what to do about it.**

God WORKS in ALL Things

Lesson

- **Big Dog Hunting**
 - **Herod Kills James and Imprisons Peter**
 - **Acts 12:1-5** – *“About that time¹ [likely AD44] Herod² [Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great and] the [current local] king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ² He killed James³ the brother of John with the sword, ³ and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, ⁴ he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread [a 7 day long festival in April].⁵ ⁴ And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison,⁶ but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.”*
 - **Who’s Herod?** – First of all, **“Herod” is a title.** It means royal leader like a king. This one is **Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great**, who was in power when Jesus was born and had all the little Hebrew boys murdered. Agrippa’s uncle Antipas was the one in power who beheaded John the Baptist and the one in power when Jesus was arrested. Not a great family. This particular Herod (Agrippa I) came from only partial Roman lineage (his mom was Hasmonean) and he used that to his advantage to win the favor of the Jewish people whose region area he was supposed to rule. **The Jews liked him** and he wanted them to.
 - **James is Beheaded: Who is James?** – There are a lot of guys named James in the New Testament. It’s tough to keep them straight. This James was **John, the Beloved’s brother** (not Jesus’ brother James who wrote the book of James and was another leader in the early Church). He was the older brother. He was, like John, a **son of Zebedee** who’s father raised them in their fishing business. James and John were called **‘sons of thunder’** likely for their boldness. It’s probable that

¹ “The phrase “about that time” (v. 1) refers to the events narrated in 11:27–30. Actually the events of 12:1–23 fell between the prophecy of Agabus (11:28) and the Jerusalem visit of Barnabas and Saul (11:30).” NICNT (New International Commentary of the New Testament) by F.F. Bruce

² “King Herod, introduced rather abruptly at the beginning of this narrative, is the elder Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great and of his Hasmonaean queen Mariamne. When his father Aristobulus was executed in 7 B.C., Agrippa, then four years old, was sent by his mother to be brought up at Rome. There he grew up on terms of close friendship with some members of the imperial family, notably with Claudius, his exact contemporary, and with Gaius, grandnephew of Tiberius. When Gaius succeeded Tiberius as emperor in A.D. 37, he bestowed on Agrippa the former tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias in southern Syria (cf. Luke 3:1), together with the title “king.” Two years later Agrippa’s kingdom was enlarged by the addition of Galilee and Peraea, the former tetrarchy of his uncle Antipas, whom Gaius deposed from his rule and sent into exile. When Claudius was made emperor in A.D. 41, after the assassination of Gaius, he further increased Agrippa’s realm by the addition of Judaea, which since A.D. 6 had been governed on the emperor’s behalf by a prefect. Agrippa was more popular with the Jews than many members of the Herod family had been: his descent from the Hasmonaean dynasty was a point in his favor. He set himself sedulously to win and retain their goodwill.” NICNT (New International Commentary of the New Testament, by F.F. Bruce)

³ “The first of his victims was James, the son of Zebedee, whom he had executed. James was the first of the apostles to meet a martyr’s death; thus he experienced the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise to him and his brother John that they would both drink from his cup and share his “baptism” (Mark 10:39). Jesus did not say, or even imply, that they would both suffer death together; indeed, John appears to have outlived all the other apostles.” NICNT

⁴ “If it is asked why this attack on the apostles should have proved “acceptable to the Jews,” the answer may be found in the wider phase of apostolic activity which had recently set in with Peter’s visit to the Gentile Cornelius in Caesarea. Those members of the Jerusalem church who, under the leadership of James the Just and his fellow-elders (cf. v. 17), maintained a more rigorous resistance to the weakening of the bonds of Jewish particularism, continued to enjoy general toleration for some two decades more.” NICNT

⁵ “The days of unleavened bread lasted from Nisan 14 (Passover Eve) until Nisan 21 (Ex. 12:18). “Passover” in v. 4 is used in a broad sense of the whole festal period which began with the paschal celebrations. Cf. Luke 22:1, in distinction from Mark 14:1.” NICNT

⁶ “The seven days of “unleavened bread” were beginning when Peter was arrested. He was therefore kept in prison for the duration of the festal period. Agrippa’s intention was to bring him out for trial and public execution immediately after this period had expired... A public execution would be offensive during the sacred season; cf. Mark 14:2, where Jesus’ enemies plan his arrest and execution “not during the feast [of unleavened bread], lest there be a tumult of the people.” NICNT

this demeanor made James a target for a lot of things. He may have been more prominent than other apostles, like Peter. He may have been seen as a key leader. James and John, like, Peter were in Jesus' "Inner Three" closest companions. It's likely that their **mom was Salome**, who was involved in the ministry of Christ too and in the early church. It is likely that 'with the sword' means **beheaded**.

- **Why would God let James be murdered?** – James is a good guy. James is one of Jesus' best friends. Why would Jesus let this happen? The world needs to be won by spreading the gospel and James is one of the best guys to do that. If you remember, **Martha didn't understand this either**. When her brother Lazarus, another good friend of Jesus died, she said, 'if you had been here he wouldn't have died.' But we know that Jesus actually waited for him to die. Jesus let him die. So, **why would God let good people die?** Don't we need more of them? Why lessen the population of the good guys? First of all everyone dies, so we can die with impact or quietly.
 - **Purpose in Death** – **we see death as something to be avoided. God doesn't**. Yes, death was a result of sin so God is not happy about it and didn't want it for His people, but it is what it is. For God's children (believers, Christians), **He transformed death** from a terrible thing to a doorway to greater freedom and glory. God knows that as long as we are away from Him we are in danger. Death isn't a bad thing for Him, although He knows the pain and takes it seriously because of what it does to us, it's a way to bring His people close. Yet, at the same time **it's a brilliant opportunity for Kingdom impact**. Think of the story of **Lazarus dying** and being raised again. Think of the story of the **Martyrs that fueled the ferocity and faith of the early Church**. Think of the statement it makes when someone is willing to die for God and what that **makes the world notice**. **Purposeful death is powerful**. The early Church knew that and martyrdom became seen as a good thing.
- **Why the Jews like the arrest and murder** – Not only were the Jewish leaders highly **irritated by the Christian movement** still, but now that it was popularly known that this Christian movement **involved the Gentile peoples**, it was specially hated. Tradition shows that the more Jewish-focused the Christian ministry was, it received more tolerance. Jesus' brother James was very Jewish-centric when he rose to leadership in the Christian church and got a lot more leeway than Peter or Paul.
- **Peter's Arrested: Who is Peter?** – He has been our main subject of this portion of the Book of Acts. He is the de facto leader of the Apostles. He is now arrested and thrown in prison and was in there a bit.
- **The Days of Unleavened Bread** – It's likely that this **7-day festival that starts at Passover Eve** (our month of April), had just begun when Peter was arrested. He would stay in prison for the whole week because to execute him during the special Jewish celebration would be a bad look for Herod. So, he was storing Peter for the end of the festival time.

- **Peter's Guards** – it seems like there were **4 guards at a time** that would watch over Peter. **Two were chained to him, one on either side. 2 more would be at the door.** At night that 4-man team would **rotate out every 3 hours**, so everyone was alert. Whether or not that many guards were needed during the day is not known. Peter seems to be a highly regarded prisoner and Herod doesn't want to risk anything.
- **Peter's in Prison; the Church Prayed** – There's two ways to look at that line. **1.) Sometimes bad stuff happens despite our best attempts to avoid it.** The Church was praying their guts out, but Peter was still currently in prison; **2.)** Since **Peter was in prison** and they couldn't solve it themselves to get him out, they **petition God and fought on their knees to get him out.** This demonstrates that the proper response for Christians in difficult times it to turn to prayer. I think both perspectives are appropriate here.
- **Mission Impossible**
 - **Peter is Rescued from Prison by an Angel**
 - **Acts 12:6-11** – *“Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison.”⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands.⁸ And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.”⁹ And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.¹⁰ When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city.⁸ It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”*
 - **The night before the feast was completed** – The 7 day Unleavened Bread feasting portion was just finishing up. Passover was over, the other activities were winding down, and Herod was going to bring Peter out the next morning to cap off the celebration with more big news that the Jews were bound to love: killing off another of those pesky Christian leaders.
 - **An angel shows up with a light** – angels are supernatural beings that serve the Lord. The fallen ones (long time ago battle for the throne of God following Lucifer who became Satan) are called demons. Angels are rarely named (we only

⁷ “Four relays of soldiers took it in turn to guard him: four guards at a time, one on either side of him (to whom he was chained) and two at his cell door...This may refer particularly to nighttime, one relay being assigned to each of the four watches of the night. “The watches are divided into four, according to the water-clock, so that it is not necessary to keep watch for more than three hours of the night” (Vegetius, *On Military Affairs* 3.8).” NICNT

⁸ “after descending “the seven steps,” as the Western text informs us. This addition has such a circumstantial character that many regard it as a genuine piece of local color, derived from an informant who knew Jerusalem as it stood before A.D. 70. Luke does not say where Peter's prison was, but it was quite probably in the Antonia fortress, where Paul was later confined (cf. 21:31–23:32). The fortress stood northwest of the temple area, and a flight of steps may have led down from it to street level comparable to flights excavated south and southwest of the temple mount since 1968.” NICNT

know of Michael and Gabriel for sure), and we don't know a ton about them, but they show up a lot in the Bible. This one shows up on a mission and brings a light since it's the middle of the night. The light doesn't wake anyone up oddly. It seems the guards are supernaturally drugged.

- **Hits Peter and gets him up** – although it was likely a rousing, it sounds harsh to hit him and say, 'hurry up, get up.' I'm sure it was all necessary and kind. Peter was out. It must be difficult to sleep chained to two dudes, likely sitting up.
- **Chains fall off on their own** – the angel seems to have full power here to do whatever he wants so the chains drop off.
- **Lots of Instruction by the angel** – Peter doesn't know what's happening so the angel has to guide everything. He tells him to get up, get dressed, put on his sandals, put on his outer cloak (for warmth), and let's go.
- **Peter thinks it's a vision** – Peter is used to weird supernatural occurrences, visions, dreams, trances, etc. So he's assuming that what's happening is all in his mind and God is telling him something but it's not really happening in real life.
- **Doors and gates open on their own** – again we see the supernatural power of the angel just making stuff happen without touching it. It could be that other angels were there doing stuff but they were invisible, I don't know. It's pretty cool though.
- **Angel gone; Peter aware** – once they are outside on the street, the angel leaves and it dawns on Peter that this is all really happening. Oh my goodness! I'm free.

- **Practical Atheism**

- **The Church Prays but Doesn't Expect Peter's Release**

- **Acts 12:12-17** – *“When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary,⁹ the mother of John whose other name was Mark,¹⁰ where many were gathered together and were praying.¹³ And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer.¹⁴ Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate.¹⁵ They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!”¹¹”¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed.¹⁷ But motioning to them with his hand to*

⁹ “he first made his way to one of the chief Christian meeting places in Jerusalem, the house of Mary. Luke's readers would be more familiar with Christians of the second generation than with those of the first, especially when a second-generation Christian attained such distinction as Mark eventually did; hence Mary is identified as the mother of Mark... The church of Jerusalem was too large to meet in any one building: its members were evidently divided for fellowship and worship into a number of house churches, one of which—presumably that to which Peter himself was attached—met in Mary's house. Her house was a large one: Martin Hengel calls it a “splendid” one, for it was distinguished by a gatehouse or forecourt²⁰ leading from the courtyard to the street door. The high priest's palace was similarly equipped: when Peter was leaving its courtyard on the night of Jesus' trial, he “went out into the forecourt” (Matt. 26:71).” NICNT

¹⁰ “Mary's son had both a Jewish name (John) and a Roman name (Mark)... This John Mark is probably identical with the Mark mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (Col. 4:10; Philem. 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13) and with the author of the Second Gospel... Later writers tell how he served Peter as his aide-de-camp and interpreter in Rome, and how he afterwards founded the church of Alexandria (this last tradition probably reflects the arrival of the Gospel of Mark in Alexandria). See extracts from Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others preserved by Eusebius (*HE* 2.15.1–16.2; 3.39.14–16; 5.8.3; 6.14.6); also M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, E. T. (London, 1985), pp. 2–24.” NICNT

¹¹ “This “angel” (like the *fravaši* in Zoroastrianism) was regarded as capable of assuming the bodily appearance of the human being whom he protected. The role of the angel Raphael in Tob. 5:4–16 probably reflects this belief. Cf. Matt. 18:10. See J. H. Moulton, “It is his angel,” *JTS* 3 (1902), pp. 514–27, especially pp. 516–17; *Early Zoroastrianism* (London, 1913), pp. 254–85.” NICNT

be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James¹² and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place."

- **Peter goes to Mary's House** – This is John Mark's mom's house where the local church, likely the one that Peter attended, was held. She was obviously wealthy (gateway, portico, servants, etc.) and that meant she had a big enough house for them to meet in when there was a lot of them. This was such a night.
 - **Who's John Mark?** – nothing else is known of Mary, but it's significant that she is mentioned by name. The readers of Luke's book of Acts would know about these people. Some of them were still around. Everyone knew who John Mark (Jewish name, Roman name) was and so his mom was kind famous as well. John Mark was the young guy who was the cousin of Barnabas and who went on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas (later in the story). He later becomes Peter's right hand man and the author of the second Gospel, the Gospel of Mark which most scholars believe he wrote from Peter's perspective. Tradition says that he started the Christian church in Alexandria.
- **Big prayer meeting in the middle of the night** – it says that many were gathered there to pray for Peter. This is in the middle of the night. Why would they all be there. It's not like apostles were imprisoned before (and maybe they met every time someone was imprisoned). But this is different. **James had just been beheaded and they were all devastated.** They didn't want to lose Peter as well. They were highly motivated to pray.
- **Peter knocks, Rhoda answers** – Peter knocks on the outer door, which would only be manned maybe by a servant because everyone else is deeper in the house praying or asleep. A servant girl, named Rhoda (who would be named by Luke if everyone would know about her or know her personally) hears the knock. It seems that she said, 'who's there' and Peter responded, 'me, open up.' The funniest thing is that she is so freaked out and excited that she doesn't open the door, but runs back in and tells them that Peter is at the door. What was Peter thinking?
- **They don't believe her or the prayer** – This is where things get crazy. When Rhoda tells them, they don't believe her and even criticize her and say, 'you are out of your mind.' Then when she insists, they come up with another bizarre

¹² "In addition to the company which met in Mary's house, there was evidently another associated with James the brother of Jesus. They too must be told of Peter's escape. The "brothers" mentioned along with him probably include his fellow-elders (cf. 11:30; 21:18). It appears that by this time James had attained a position of undisputed leadership in the Jerusalem church. When Barnabas and Paul had the conference with the "pillars" of that church described in Gal. 2:1–10, the three "pillars" with whom they conferred were James, Cephas (Peter), and John, named in that order. James on that occasion concurred with his two colleagues in exchanging "the right hand of fellowship" with Barnabas and Paul on the understanding that the latter two should evangelize Gentiles, while the Jerusalem leaders would continue to concentrate on their mission to Jews. James had a statesmanlike breadth of vision, as appears from his policy at the Council of Jerusalem (15:13–21). But he was careful to retain the confidence of the ordinary church members in Jerusalem, many of whom were "zealots for the law" (21:20). In addition, he continued to the end to command the respect of the Jerusalem populace, largely because of his ascetic way of life and his regular participation in the temple services of prayer, where he interceded for the people and their city. Whatever Peter and other members of the Twelve may have done, James was free of any suspicion of fraternizing with Gentiles. When he was stoned to death in A.D. 62, at the instance of the high priest Ananus II, many of the people were gravely shocked; and some years later some ascribed the calamity which overtook the city and its inhabitants to the cessation of James's prayers on their behalf." NICNT

excuse to not believe it, saying that it's his 'ghost' (there was an ancient belief that the angels who attend to people take on their form – like a morphing guardian angel concept). Notice that it's anything but believing that what they were praying for could miraculously and did miraculously happen.

- **When we dismiss the messenger** – is it possible that they ignored Rhoda because of her **status**? Maybe it was that she was a **servant**. Maybe it was because she was a **woman**. Maybe it was because she was **young**. It's not clear, but it is clear that they dismissed her and even criticized her saying 'she's out of her mind.' They didn't trust her to share the information. Interestingly that is the same response the ladies received when they came back from the empty tomb. **Too often God wants to communicate something to us, even something that would really bless us, but we refuse to hear it through the messenger God selected.**
- **When we pray like atheists** – they were praying like crazy for Peter to be freed, but when it happened they didn't accept it or believe it. That showed that **they didn't really anticipate a literal response**. Too often we pray like atheists. We say all the right things but then are shocked when something happens, and God answers it. We pray like we don't really believe it matters. We ought to pray with anticipation and look for the answer to come. **Too often what starts as guarding our hearts from disappointment leads to practical atheism.**
- **Praying with expectation and looking for the answer - [complete]**
- **Why James and not Peter?**¹³ – Why did Peter get freed from prison but James was allowed to get murdered? Both were doing the work of God. Both were precious to God (similar idea is found in reading through the last half of Hebrews 11). Why one and not the other?
 - **Complex Plans of God** – **It's not random, it's complex. We don't track on it, but we trust the One who is running it.** Don't assume that it has anything to do with God caring less about someone.
 - **Peter kept knocking** – we find out that at the end of his revelation to them he leaves to go somewhere else, so it wasn't that he had to knock to get in and stay there for hiding. He was knocking because he knew they all cared about him, and he couldn't just leave without telling them the good news and that their prayers had impact. **He wanted to both glorify God and build their faith, and that is why we tell each other of the praises when ministry helps us.**
 - **Tell the other leadership, I'm outta here** – He needed all the key people to know what God had done. It was a HUGE deal. He told them to tell Jesus' brother James (author of the book of James), a pillar in the Church at that time, and the other apostles and leadership. Then he went to hide somewhere.

- **Taming Tyrants**

¹³ "That James should die while Peter should escape is a mystery of divine providence which has been repeated countless times in the history of the people of God. By faith, says the writer to the Hebrews, some "escaped the edge of the sword"; by faith others "were killed with the sword" (Heb. 11:34, 37)." NICNT

- **King Herod is Put in His Place**

- **Acts 12:18-25** – *“Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death.¹⁴ Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there.^{15 20} Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king’s country for food.^{16 21} On an appointed day¹⁷ Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²² And the people were shouting, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!”²³ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ²⁴ But the word of God increased and multiplied. ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.*

- **Herod’s mad and soldiers die** – obviously the next morning when everyone realizes that the prisoner escaped, there was going to be consequences. The rule for Roman guards was that if your prisoner escapes you suffer their fate. Peter was going to die so they died. But Herod was super mad because it was ruining his fun plans to get in good with the Jews. He was really looking forward to this. He could always arrest another apostle, but clearly there was (in his ignorant opinion) a mole in the organization that let Peter go.
- **Herod Being Appeased** – The author of Acts, Luke, continues on the short account of what Herod was like and what he did, so he mentions that after this story with Peter, he did some travel and on those travels he wanted to handle an issue with the cities of Tyre and Sidon, who had done something to tick him off. He came in hot and was met with them kissing up to him and apologizing. They relied on the Roman empire for food and they knew that no matter what they didn’t want to tick off leadership. So they were going to throw a party for him to make everything good.
- **Herod’s Death Story¹⁸** - So the people of Tyre and Sidon gathered together and likely threw a party or attended a party/gathering that Rome put together.

¹⁴ “By Roman law (which, however, was not binding on Agrippa in the internal administration of his kingdom) a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape became liable to the same penalty as the escaped prisoner would have suffered.” NICNT

¹⁵ “Soon afterward, Agrippa left Jerusalem for Caesarea, the seat of government of Judaea under the Romans. When it is said that he “went down from Judaea,” Judaea is used in its narrower sense of the territory of the Jews. Caesarea, although it belonged politically to Judaea, was not in strictly Jewish territory: from its foundation by Herod the Great it was a predominantly Gentile city.” NICNT

¹⁶ “The cities of the Phoenician seaboard, Tyre and Sidon, depended on Galilee for their food supply, as they had done a thousand years earlier in the time of Hiram and Solomon (1 Kings 5:9–12). When, therefore, the inhabitants of those cities found that they had given Agrippa grave offense, for some reason which has not been recorded, they realized that it would be wise for them to regain his favor as soon as possible. They made use accordingly of the good offices of his chamberlain Blastus (whatever his services cost them, the price was worthwhile), and an opportunity was found for them to present themselves before the king and make their peace with him publicly.” NICNT

¹⁷ “The “appointed day” on which the Phoenicians were to be publicly reconciled with Agrippa is commonly held to have been a festival celebrated quinquennially on March 5 in honor of the foundation of Caesarea. (Another possibility is that it was held to celebrate the emperor’s birthday on August 1.)” NICNT

¹⁸ “We are indebted to Josephus for a parallel account of what followed. At Caesarea, says Josephus, Agrippa “exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, knowing that this was celebrated as a festival for his welfare. There came together for this occasion a large number of provincial officials and others of distinguished position. On the second day of the shows Agrippa put on a robe made of silver throughout, of quite wonderful

Herod comes out dressed in what historian Josephus records as being shimmering silver and over the top so that the sun would glisten and he would look angelic. He was very, very arrogant and wanting everyone to praise him. Sure enough it had that affect and the people of Tyre and Sidon needed to take this opportunity to kiss up to him so they started encouraging his speech with praise saying, 'this is no ordinary man, he speaks like a god'. Well, the one true God heard that and looked over at Herod to see how he would handle this. Herod was already walking a fine line for harming God's saints. Sure enough, Herod was loving the adulation and praise and soaking it up. Luke records that he was stuck down by an angel, eaten by worms, and died. Sheesh, I hope not in that order! But yup, he's gone. God reached his limit of this idiot. Done.

- **The one who looked powerful was trumped** – notice that the one guy who was wrecking havoc on the church like he owned the world, this Herod, who killed James without a care in the world, seemed untouchable. But God shut him down in an instant. Who is the real power player here? And that goes for us. We obey God rather than man. God is in charge even today. It's not the influential people, the government, it's God. He's who we serve. He's on the throne.
- **The word of God increased and multiplied** – This is almost like a God-flex. He not only killed the king who killed His man James, but flipped the script to expand the Church despite Rome's attempts to shut it down. God didn't let James' blood go to waste.
- **Saul, Barnabas & John Mark** – as we close we see a set up for future stories with Saul and Barnabas, who had come together to minister for a year at Antioch and then went down to Jerusalem to bring the financial gift from Antioch, now heading back to the homebase in Antioch. They grabbed Barnabas' cousin John Mark, who we talked about earlier. This trio is about to do some great things for the Kingdom.

Conclusion

- **Walking by faith and not by sight** – Prison looked impossible, but it wasn't for God. Herod seemed unstoppable but he wasn't, because of God. These are reasons why we live by faith and by God and not by sight or the limitations of our minds and perspectives. God lives by different rules and so do we.

weaving, and entered the theatre at break of day. Then the silver shone and glittered wonderfully as the sun's first rays fell on it, and its resplendence inspired a sort of fear and trembling in those who gazed at it. Immediately his flatterers called out from various directions, in language which boded him no good, for they invoked him as a god: 'Be gracious to us!' they cried. 'Hitherto we have revered you as a human being, but henceforth we confess you to be of more than mortal nature.' He did not rebuke them, nor did he repudiate their impious flattery. But soon afterward he looked up and saw an owl sitting on a rope above his head, and recognized it at once as a messenger of evil as on a former occasion it had been a messenger of good; and a pang of grief pierced his heart. At the same time he was seized with a severe pain in his bowels, which quickly increased in intensity.... He was hastily carried into the palace, and ... when he had suffered continuously for five days from the pain in his belly, he died, in the fifty-fourth year of his life and the seventh year of his kingship." The accounts of Luke and Josephus are independent, but they agree in all essentials." NICNT