

Theme: As You Are Going: The Church on Mission

Message: God Will Not Lose! – Acts 12:1-25

Aim: No matter the opposition, God will not lose (nor will we).

Intro: Pastor Derek brought a meaningful message last week entitled “The Hand of the Lord was with them,” detailing the work of God in Antioch, where believers were 1st called Christians. The gospel spread thru persecution & Gentiles as well as Jews were being reached for Christ. Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to check out what was going on. He encouraged the new believers & went to get Saul/Paul so they together could disciple them. Upon hearing a prophecy about a coming famine, those Gentile believers sent financial support to the church in Judea. Indeed, the hand of the Lord was w/them. Then we come to chapter 12, which challenges the whole premise of chapter 11 & last week’s message, but the word of God in chap12 does not at all contradict the word of God in chap11. Theme: As you are going – the Church on mission. We’ve already seen it in previous chapters: when the Church is on mission & the gospel is going forth & God is at work, there will be opposition. But, the message of Acts 12; the message for the Church today; the message for you/I today is that God will not lose!

Acts 12:1-25 [READ]. Let’s walk thru this chapter. I) **Herod laid violent hands on some.** David Gudzik comments that “This was Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled in the days of Jesus’ birth. Herod Agrippa I was also the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had a role in the trial of Jesus.” “Violent hands” is a very picturesque description. Herod was a puppet king of the Jews, under Roman rule. He arrested James the apostle, brother of John, the gospel writer. Then he had James killed “w/the sword,” the 1st of the apostles martyred for their faith & ministry. His brother John would be the only apostle not martyred, tho they certainly tried. James’ death was a big loss for the Church but it didn’t stop the Church. God will not lose! And we should be clear – tho James lost his life, he didn’t lose his eternal salvation. He will not lose, because God will not lose. James has a place in the Father’s kingdom & will reign w/Christ forever. No matter what this life brings, if you are in Christ, you will not lose. When Herod saw that James’ execution pleased the Jews, he “proceeded to arrest Peter.”

Peter, James & John were the disciples of the inner circle w/Jesus. Not sure if Herod knew that but certainly Satan did. I'm sure he thought that if he could take out those top 3 leaders of the Church, it would put them in turmoil. Peter was put in prison until after Passover, which probably kept Herod from putting Peter to death right away. Would this stop the progress of the Church? "Earnest prayer for [Peter] was made to God by the church." Are you earnestly praying about your situation (me)? Are we earnestly praying about the mission God has set before us? God motivated His Church to pray & in concert w/those prayers He moved. We never lose when we pray, because God will not lose! II) **God sent an angel to release Peter.** Peter lost his freedom, temporarily. He was being guarded by "4 squads of soldiers." It seems these squads were comprised of 4 soldiers each, who took shifts, w/2 soldiers bound to Peter at any given time, & 2 soldiers guarding the door of the prison. It also seems that Herod was planning to bring Peter out to the people (& condemn him to die) as soon as Passover was over, which would be in the evening at 6 PM, when the Jewish day ended. That very night, when Peter was asleep (evidently not anxious at all, even tho it might have been his last night), "an angel of the Lord stood next to him, & a light shone in the cell." This didn't awaken Peter & tho Luke doesn't write it, the guards were either blinded & deafened or like the guards at Jesus' tomb, were stupefied, having fainted away when they saw the angel. The angel woke Peter up, instructed him to get up, dress himself & put on his walking shoes. "The chains fell off his hands" & Peter followed the angel out of the prison. Peter thought he was dreaming & having a vision of all this until "they came to the iron gate leading into the city." The gate "opened for them of its own accord," by the hand of God & soon the angel left Peter. Peter "came to himself" & realized God had rescued him by sending His angel. Herod's plot was foiled & the expectations of the Jewish leaders were dashed. God will not lose! Peter went to where he knew some of the disciples would gather – the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark (gospel writer), which may have been where the upper room of the last supper was hosted. There were "many...gathered" [there] praying – for Peter. Peter knocked on the door of the gateway & a servant girl – Rhoda – "came to answer;" but she

was so shocked to see that it was Peter & hear his voice, she didn't open the gate. Instead, "ran in & reported that Peter was standing at the gate!" They thought her deluded & when she insisted it was so, they thought it was his angel. Gudzik points out that "The Jews believed in the idea of guardian angels, and it seems that some among them may have believed that one's guardian angel bore some kind of resemblance to the human it was assigned to." As Peter kept knocking, they finally went & opened the gate, "saw him & were amazed." Peter told them what happened & asked them to relay that message to James (brother of Jesus, leader in the early Church) & other apostles. Then he "went to another place" – probably knowing that Herod would be searching for him, which he did & the soldiers who had been guarding Peter were condemned to death. Peter would eventually be martyred, but this was not the time. God still had work for him to do, which could not be stopped. Jesus said, "I will build My Church, & the gates of hell will not prevail against it"

(Mt.16:18). God will not lose! III) **God had the final word w/Herod.**

He raises up kings & dethrones them. His kingdom will never end.

Herod had gone to Caesarea & a delegation from Tyre & Sidon, w/whom he was angry for some reason, came to ask him for peace.

"Their country depended on the king's country (Israel) for food." It's amazing how much food is produced in Israel today & evidently then as well. It's a land "flowing w/milk & honey." Herod took the opportunity to come w/pomp & circumstance & to orate – that means to give a flowery or self-aggrandizing speech. Those from Tyre & Sidon wanted to win Herod's favor, so they began to shout, "The voice of a god, & not of a man." Herod reveled in that acclaim & "did not give God the glory," & an angel struck him down" immediately. "He was eaten by worms & breathed his last." The Jewish historian Josephus reported on Herod's death: "He put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he

was a god...A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner... when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life.” (*Antiquities*, XIX.8.2) God will always have the final word. Those who mock God will not prevail, because God will not lose! IV) **Note Vs24** – “But the word of God increased & multiplied.” The word of God & the work of God cannot be stopped! His word is true no matter what claims are made against it. Christ is building & will build His Church. His kingdom has come & will come. The gospel is going forth into all the world & will, until the last convert comes to faith. Vs24 sets the stage for vs25, which sets the stage for Acts 13 & beyond. The being Christ’s witnesses “to the ends of the earth” was about to commence. God will not lose! No matter whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris wins/loses in the upcoming election, God will not lose! Whether Israel or Hamas, or Russia or Ukraine wins/loses, God will not lose! Whether abortion rights or pro-life sanctity of life prevails/is defeated, God will not lose. No matter your life circumstances – God will not lose! And we who are in Christ are victorious w/Him, tho it seems at times to be loss. God will not lose, nor fail. And, His mission will not fail. We must be on mission w/Him if we would be victorious in the work of the gospel. Keep praying for lost loved ones. Keep sharing the gospel to those God brings across your path. Keep encouraging one another in the Christian walk & work. The enemy may/will try to slow us down, stop us, but he cannot prevail. God will not lose! Knowing that our God will not lose, let us be a church on mission.