

11/6/22 - Acts 12:1-25 - "Wake-up Call to the Christian Life"

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[0 : 00] Morning. Today's passage is in Acts 12. So if you have your Bibles, you can turn there. We're actually going to be reading the entire chapter of Acts 12.

So we'll be starting in verse 1, going to the end of the chapter. This is the word of the Lord, starting in Acts chapter 12.

About that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

This was during the days of unleavened bread. 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.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. 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.

[1 : 18] 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 of his hands. 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. 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.

When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord. And they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.

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.

[2 : 23] When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together, and they were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer.

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. 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. But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed.

But motioning to them with his hands to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things to James and to the brothers.

Then he departed and went to another place. Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death.

[3 : 31] Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. 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. On an appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them.

And the people were shouting, The voice of a god and not a man. 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. But the word of God increased and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

This is the word of the Lord. Well, good morning, everyone.

[4 : 44] This wonderful day. It's not every November that we have not seen that S word yet called snow. But we were out in shorts yesterday, probably raking leaves.

What a fantastic season of fall it's been, between the foliage and the beautiful scenery around us. But we're reminded, if you've been in Walmart near you, you've heard Mariah Carey O'Reay singing the tune.

And we know that Christmas is right around the bend. And Christmas is right around the bend even for us as a church. And we'll be getting into a couple of different series after today.

And, you know, sometime in the coming years, get back to the Book of Acts. And so we're going to be decorating the church and everything, making the spirit bright, as the songs say.

And it's going to be fun. I'm really excited about Christmas. I'm always excited about Christmas, if you really want to know about it. So, I was thinking, being so far through this book in Acts, through this entire series, we're in the mid-20s with messages.

[6 : 07] It's been a journey going through the foundation and the founding of the early church. The questions have all been addressed of, why are we doing this?

How did we get here? And we've been hitting a couple of those foundational key aspects within the foundation of the early church.

I wanted you to imagine something, though. Something that I am very familiar with. Because as a child, it would be a dangerous situation for me to have a rock in my hand.

And upon the lake that I'd be overseeing, being crystal clear. It's like that mirror reflection of that lake.

You could see the sky above upon the reflection of the lake. A couple little disruptions in the water from fish getting their breakfast with the morning dew kind of coming off.

[7 : 21] But here's Brent standing with his rock, about to ruin it all. The temptation would become overwhelming for me to disrupt that entire scene and chuck that stone as long and as far as I possibly can.

Right? And like everyone knows what happens, upon immediate impact, upon that still water lake, creates this massive just epicenter of an impact and all of these reverberating rings coming forth that center.

The book of Acts is similar to this. The book of Acts is similar to this. In Acts chapter 1, Luke put together this book.

He had a purpose. Theophilus commissioned the literary work to be done of the foundation and the early church movement. And that he did.

And the Acts chapter 1, 1 through 14, served as that introduction to the entire book. And what this served as is a purpose statement.

[8 : 42] But it really began in verse 6 of chapter 1. Where the disciples, it says, When they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?

And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, has come upon you.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. The fulfillment initially came of this promise from Jesus Christ to his disciples before he ascended.

This fulfillment initially came by the Holy Spirit making his grand debut in Jerusalem. A shockwave! Just like that stone that Brent rebelliously throws upon that crystal lake. A shockwave! And it was emphasized, this shockwave within the walls of Jerusalem was emphasized from Acts chapter 1, verse 15, and carried all the way to chapter 8.

[10 : 07] All Jerusalem! And additionally, the shockwaves of this impact in Jerusalem began to spread geographically, just as was promised in Acts chapter 1, verse 8.

In all of the surrounding regions, the Holy Spirit would make another impact. In all Judea, and another impact. In Samaria and the ends of the earth.

The series begins to take a shift today, though. From the spread of the gospel outside the walls in Jerusalem that carried us from chapter 8 to chapter 11, to last week, and we saw the vibrancy in Antioch.

Today, in chapter 12, it sort of takes a transition. And we began to sense a transition taking place, if you were gathered here or watched the stream from last week, with the fact that Barnabas was seeking Saul, and the mention of those two characters, and them strengthening the church in Antioch, and them also supplying the relief efforts to the elders all throughout the region of Judea. And we also see the mention of Barnabas again, with Saul and John Mark. And so it's kind of a transition.

[11 : 33] And the next ripple effect of this book is going to launch Saul, who will be known as Paul, his missionary journeys, beginning to start in chapter 13, and carrying onward.

But we'll take a pause before we get into his missionary work. And I don't want you to think of today as just like, oh, okay, well, just say what you need to say, like that one song that's always playing in our heads.

And I don't want us to minimize the transitional chapters. I don't want us to minimize these times where Luke is taking a transition and sort of just breeze right over it and miss the content and the weight and depth within.

Let's not minimize the passage today. Today's passage will cause us to think deeply and practically at the reason we can trust God's sovereignty.

And it will also remind us of the great cost of God's sovereignty. Because we live in a day and age where the Christian life is sort of this walk in the park, just life improvements, that you got Jesus now and everything is just great.

[12 : 58] You just got a house. Jesus gave you all this stuff. But it's an unbiblical worldview to think that it's easy to be a Christian.

It's easy to find joy when everything is going right. It's easy to find happiness when you just got an approved loan. You just got a new job. Something happened in your life.

It's easy to find joy. The world finds joy in those things. Everything's good. But Luke uses two angelic wake-up calls in the passage today to remind his audience and us today of the biblical worldview.

A worldview that if it were a walk in the park, you know the saying, it would be that of Jurassic Park, of danger literally lurking around the corner at every twist and turn in our lives.

Here we become reminded in chapter 12 that the biblical Christian life is actually a call to die. It's a call to sacrifice.

[14 : 15] It's a call to suffer. And this is a biblical Christian life. That joy is certain regardless of tomorrow's uncertainty.

Amen? So please don't miss God speaking to us today, myself included, as we conclude this part of our series in Acts.

And let's take great notes today. Mental notes, physical notes, whatever your weapon is, take great notes to remind us on days that we are often prone to forget it all.

This message is titled The Wake-Up Call to the Christian Life. And I would like you to join me in prayer as we break this up into two different sections and two different wake-up calls that occur in the narrative and have the Lord speak and direct our lives today.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we come to You humbly, not forgetting that the very posture of prayer expresses our humility compared to You.

[15 : 41] Often we lose sight of this as if we deserve anything in this life. We take the very breath in our lungs for granted. We take waking up for granted. We take all these things, electricity, all these things that are just common in this life.

We take them all for granted. But Father, help us to see something a little bit deeper within this life, something a little bit more difficult to understand.

And that often has to do with Your sovereignty over it all. So let us be challenged today, encouraged, rebuked, corrected. But whatever You will through Your Word, allow it to be so by the power of Your Holy Spirit working in our midst and within our lives.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So the first section that we have today is the wake-up call to the church.

And just as I sort of alluded to in some opening remarks with the passage, we see that the chapter sort of transitions from the vibrancy of the church found last week in Antioch, and the vibrancy of the church begins to conflict with the violence against the church.

[17:06] The vibrancy conflicts with the violence. The hand of God that is upon the church, that is propelling the vibrancy and the source of vibrancy of the church is conflicting with the hand of man trying to weigh against the church.

We can't miss that conflict, the tension that occurs just early on as they mention, as it's mentioned with Herod the king laying his violent hands in verse 1.

We see that there is something going on here that we often forget about and we are often so ignorant of, and that's just how much the world truly does hate the church.

And if they can't kill us and get rid of us, they're just going to try to distort our message so that it's more appealing to their worldview and more kind to their convictions.

And so kind of just taking a couple things out of here and there and just adapting it and changing it. But in these days, the Word of God was not distorted.

[18:22] It was apostolically guarded. It was apostolically carried from each ripple effect from Jerusalem to Judea to all Samaria to the Gentile home in Cornelius' house.

Each one was preserved by apostolic authority and thus spread from there. Any hint of association of being part of the church as was Herod's problem, as verse 1 states, that they belonged to the church, literally put a crosshair of the world's scope upon your head.

Doesn't oppression often ask us, where is God? When things get hard, it asks sometimes our questioning, I'm guilty of it.

Where is God in this? Because it's challenging at times. The experiences and what God allows to occur in this life are sometimes very, very challenging.

And you see, the story of Antioch clearly sees the hand of God, but now this? This is suspicious. Luke details in verse 2 a suffering church.

[19:45] Great movement and vibrancy in Antioch, but now James' life is surrendered for the gospel at the hand of this violent king. Literally, it's known that he was beheaded for his faith.

Get a graphic picture in your head. It will do you right to feel the tension in this passage. This is fulfillment of exactly what Jesus Christ promised to the disciples at the foot washing, that they would also partake in the same cup of suffering as he would.

And James was the forerunner of that after Stephen, obviously. And Peter was thrown into prison in verse 2 and 2 through 4 we see.

He's the next victim to be executed. It was the days of unleavened bread, which basically means it's the beginning of Passover. And so, after this Passover feast, after the Jews have overseen their religious practices, as ironic and hypocritical as it can seem, they're going to get rid of Peter soon too, just like James.

And so, working through the apostolic body, the problem causers and the bloodthirst, you see, church, of the world will never be satisfied until each and every Christian is brought to their death, whether they want to admit it or not.

[21:12] Or, like I said, completely distort and change the message of the Christian church. until the gospel is essentially silenced and censored.

But, we know, above all, the world is out for blood, but they're out for the wrong blood. Isn't there hope?

Isn't there grace of God that can be bestowed even to Saul, who was once persecuting the church? Can't the world see the miraculous, generous, greatness of God that gives us forgiveness by the blood of Jesus Christ?

They're out for the wrong blood. James is dead. Peter is good as dead. What in the world can the church do? And we get a description.

You see that? They turn to earnest prayer. They turned to earnest prayer in verse 5.

[22:19] And we get quite a description, a dispensation of the church. When things got tough, the church got on their knees.

I could only imagine what they were praying for, though, right? What could they possibly be praying for? Their own safety? Safety of Peter? Peter? Maybe some strength?

He's pretty heavily guarded, don't you think? Luke goes to great detail to say, Peter, there's no way out of this for Peter. There's no getting away. And he says in verse 6, now when Herod was about to bring him out, it was the end of Passover, he 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 guarded, regarding the prison.

One thing that I am sure that this church was praying for was that Peter would have peace and confidence in God in that prison cell. It's kind of seeing into the text a little bit, so I don't want to emphasize it too much, but look, who sleeps in between two guards?

Who sleeps? We can barely sleep in our day and age when we have an exam coming up for college students. We can barely sleep when we know we have a work day coming up.

[23 : 52] Or if you're like me, we have those unfinished house project that we just started and it's like holding a sneeze until you can finish that drywall and you can't sleep.

One thing's for sure, death itself ought not to cause the church to lose our beauty sleep. not only that, we see God fulfills prayers, that's a wake up call, that'll shake us even at the times and the day of our death.

We should sleep well, we should, but not only that, God exceeds our prayers too. You see that? Not only was Peter sleeping somehow, the angel comes and he has to actually wake him up by striking him.

There's great details of a vibrant light and all this stuff, but still, Peter's sitting there in his REM cycle. The angels came to rescue him.

Verse 7, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him. I can only imagine maybe how long. Like, really? Wow, you're comfortable there with your chains and your nice little pillow of a guard?

[25 : 10] And he struck him. on the side. A light shone in the cell and he struck Peter on the side and woke him saying, get up quickly.

And chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, dress yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And the angel said to him, wrap your cloak around you and follow me. And he went out and followed him. He did not know what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

And might I add, if you're a Harry Potter fan here, if we're not careful, we might see something here. And we might think the invisibility cloak actually existed long before Harry Potter came out. but regardless of what you think happened here, it was miraculous to say the absolute least. Verse 10 says, when they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city.

[26 : 25] It opened for them of its own accord and they went out and went along one street and immediately the angel left him. What in the world just happened?

I know, it's amazing. Drop your coffee over it. When Peter came to himself, when he's like, I get this vision of Columbo just kind of mysteriously thinking about the case that he's trying to crack.

He came to himself, Peter came to himself and he said, now I know, 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.

We can't read something like this and ignore having a theology of angels in the Christian life. It's not the emphasis of this passage, but it definitely brings that there is definitely intervention within this life where God uses angels and you can deal with the Bible over that.

But the proper theology kind of rests in their role, though. Peter doesn't say, well, let me thank you, Mr. Angel.

[27 : 54] Let me worship and bow down to you, Mr. Angel. No, he knew the source of all of that which was happening, belonged to the Lord in verse 11.

The Lord has sent his angel. He was giving the Lord proper thanks. This was the day. Passover was over. This was the day of judgment. Right? At the dawning of the sun, while this powerful king sought to end Peter's life, God executed his own supreme judgment to preserve Peter's life.

Why? Because God did it. God wanted to. And God saw it fit. The previous confusion of what was occurring becomes clear to Peter.

And he runs over to John Mark's mother's house. Apparently, this is probably a sort of known Christian safe house in this area. And it takes us to a very comical scene.

[28 : 59] We can't forget who John Mark is. John Mark is going to be a critical role in the forward discipleship within missionary journeys. And also, John Mark is the author of the Gospel of Mark.

This was that guy's house. I mean, this place was laid out. It had a gate. It had this courtyard. It's described in somebody wealthy. This was a Christian safe house.

It was a place where you took refuge. And we see something that's happening here. This was definitely a refuge and a shelter for praying Christians. Ones that are interceding.

And we get this comical scene in verse 12. Do you see it? Peter arrives, knocks on the door, wrote him, answers, and hears Peter's voice.

literally like us with Jehovah's witnesses. We don't get excited, we get scared, run away. She gets excited, and she forgets Peter at the door, runs back into the house.

[30 : 08] Peter's literally alive, not dead, as which was Herod's plan. Peter's left out there, probably coming to himself again like, what is happening here?

Do they know this is me? I'm alive. Help me. Let me in. Remember? I'm Peter. So he continues to knock.

Everyone's sort of gaslighting Rhoda in the house, kind of saying, it's probably Peter's angel, another aspect of angels' existence, and theology of angels, but they're just like, just, okay, Rhoda, right?

Go back inside. And no, Peter kept knocking. And once that door opened, there was a unifying joy in this Christian safe house.

And before Peter leaves, he shares not what the angel did on his behalf, he doesn't even mention an angel, but what God did. He mentions and shares what God did.

[31 : 12] This is important. And he says to go and tell this, and then he's gone. God does the God not only answers our prayers at times, gives us comfort in the most uncomfortable situations, sitting between two guards with chains and shackles uncomfortably, like we're getting a sleep test at the sleep doctor with all the wires.

He doesn't only fulfill prayer, God also exceeds our prayers. God does the impossible because he's the God of the impossible.

Our logic, our systems, everything Darwin came up with, yeah, it's creative, it's compelling, but it's not how God operates. God has no bounds. He's within, he's outside, he's infinite, and we can be assured that we do not need to call upon angels to protect us.

We simply need to call upon God to protect us. We don't need to precisely articulate the words so that God will be able to know exactly our needs as if he doesn't know them already before our mouth speaks.

This is actually a belief in many churches today that exists, this precise articulation. God does as he wills in our rescue or in our capture.

[32 : 50] Don't we give that reality a wake-up call of knowing that God didn't intervene on James' behalf? That's important to know.

Was it because that the prayers and supplications of all those gathered in John Mark's mother's house wasn't sufficiently articulated to say, could you keep James' head on?

Right? No. Of course not. Church, we must trust in God, not try to manipulate Him, and our trust in God is tested when we get the unexpected answer at times, whether that's for our benefits or possibly for our demise.

In that, our responsibility is not to understand why things happen, but to trust regardless of how things happen. The initiative of prayer is far more important than the articulation of prayer.

Romans 8, 26 talks about that we don't even know what to pray. If you gave us the chance to pray exactly what we ought to pray, we are going to fail that test. But the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf.

[34 : 15] Our prayers are made known to God the Father through the Holy Spirit, and so we trust in that. It's a theological reality of sovereignty, church.

It's a theological reality. This is something that we see in Daniel, with Daniel's friends. As they spoke in chapter 3, verse 17, they said, if this be so, if they're about to meet their death, they say, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O King.

But if not, be it known to you, O King, that you will not serve, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

God is sovereign. He's sovereign. When we know, when we trust that God is sovereign, we trust that He knows all things, and He's above all things, and as history is unraveling, He's with His steady hand like water in a creek that Brent just disrupted with His rock, He's guiding the pathway of history according to His will.

This shifts our perspectives, and when our perspectives shift, our lives hold steadfast to know, to what we know rather than what we feel.

[35 : 55] We trust in who God is rather than how we perceive Him to be. To say it plainly, our faith is in what we know, not what we feel, and it's important for us to understand this sooner before it's too late.

In other words, the church ought to sleep well. The church ought to sleep well. This is the first wake-up call.

We see the church is changing. There's trials increasing, but the church remains united in prayer, holding firm to the promise of God in Acts 1, verse 8.

And with the apostles being driven out, everything's changing. We don't like change. Did you know that? We hate it, especially in the church, where we're really close together at all times.

We hate change. But things are changing. The apostles, they're being driven out. We don't know where Peter went, but he's gone. He left us with this nice little sentiment to share, but he's gone, and we don't know where to find him.

[37 : 04] And they're passing the baton to the elders to protect the apostolic message and to shepherd the Christians well throughout all Judea. We see this transition happening, and for Peter, the dawn of judgment that God pronounced for him was freedom.

This day of judgment that God pronounced for Peter was freedom. But let's see how it pans out for Herod, the Agrippa, Herod, Agrippa the first, the Herod of this day.

In the second section, we see another wake-up call. That's a wake-up call to the world. Verse 18.

Now when the day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.

And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the centurions and ordered that they should be put to death. And then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. As dawn breaks, oh snap, there's been a prison break. At the break of dawn, the prison has been broken.

[38 : 23] This prison was quite disturbed to the point that blood was shedding on behalf of those who mishandled a prisoner. This was Herod's moment.

He got James, he wanted Peter. And I'd imagine like Peter, this king had his fair share of beauty rest that night. Don't you think? Knowing that he got Peter and there's more to come, just finding his soulless, being satisfied in himself and not God.

You see, the problem with Israel's leaders all throughout time has been that they've needed rebuked.

They've needed corrected. The nation of Israel has historically had a leadership problem. The minor prophets constantly addressed them numerous, numerous times.

Numerous selfish kings whose welfare benefited on the backs of Christians, of, well, the Jews of that day. And we see in this day and age it's still occurring to the Christians is what I'm trying to say.

[39 : 35] And so, Peter and John, they addressed a similar problem back in Acts 4 with the Sanhedrin, that they are basically being disobedient to God. The God that they worship, the God that they give money to and receive lots of money and have really nice cars and houses and benefit from the welfare of the people.

And here we have Herod, Agrippa I. He was known as like this peace keeper of this region among Judea. And so, between the Roman citizens and the Roman leaders and Jerusalem, he's sort of like this peace keeper.

And I would also, he'd also go down in history as one who was another powerful, another self-seeking, another selfish leader of God's people that needs rebukes.

peace. He worshiped himself in the name of God and caused others to do the same.

That's what Luke is writing here in verse 20 through 22. Herod, he got angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. And they came to him in one accord, persuaded him, saying, oh, but you're our source of peace.

[41 : 05] You're our provider. Agrippa, we need you. Right? They depended on the king's country for food.

And look, it even goes a step further in verse 21. On this appointed day, on some appointed day, Herod put on robes, took a seat upon his throne, and delivered a oration to them.

It was so sophisticated. These people were so sadly worshipping idols and idolizing their leader, that they said, the voice of God, not of a man.

Luke is making a case to his intended audience then that there is impending doom awaiting for those who play God. as well as those who encourage their playing God as well.

It's a dual responsibility in this passage. John Stott mentions that tyrants may be permitted for a time to boast and bluster, oppressing the church and hindering the spread of the gospel, but they will not last.

[42 : 20] In the end, their empire will be broken and their pride abased. Herod is the epitome of a leader who plays God. He's the epitome of a leader who plays God.

What's he doing? He's executing judgment. He's the object of sustenance and provision. He's the recipient of worship of his majesty.

all attributes of the Almighty God. This is known as idolatry, church. And leaders today who hold a Bible in their hand commit the same even in pulpits around our world.

This brought another visit of an angel, another wake-up call, another strike. of man. Just as he did with Peter, but this, Herod Agrippa I, would be struck with a death blow.

He would not be rescued. Verse 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.

[43 : 50] Think about that when you're eating lunch later today. The declaration of the church is freedom. The declaration of the world is bondage.

The church, you find freedom. The world, you find bondage. church, how can we do this wrong? The writing is there on the wall just like in Daniel.

We can debate how God brought about the impending doom of those who steal God's glory. We could say, well, maybe he got appendicitis or maybe he got some other terminal illness. It doesn't matter.

God made it so by the hand and the strike of an angel to bring about God's judgment. judgment. It doesn't matter how it happened. It's the fact that it happens. And the point remains. God's enemies will face judgment.

And the world is constantly going against the message of the gospel. They're at war with God.

[45 : 00] It's not my opinion. It's the Bible's truth about the matter. It's a wake-up call today. The glory in this life will never compare to the glory that awaits a repentant heart.

Anything in this life falls short of the glory that awaits for his church. The same God who sent the angel as a rescuer is the same God who sent an angel as a destroyer.

Great is that God. And great is that God to be praised above even the angel whom he sends. For us today, we know that God is a forgiver for those who repent.

It didn't have to end this way for Herod Agrippa I. It didn't. Because the gospel is simple. If you want to summarize the gospel, it's change your life, live this way, stop what you're doing, and do this.

God rules over creation as creator and king. And we as people, humanity, have sinned against a holy God.

[46 : 10] And the solution isn't found in our own efforts, but through Christ's sacrifice. And we, as repentant sinners, have to respond in faith.

And by that faith, it justifies us. And we are legally forgiven. Change your life. Repent and live this way.

that's the message of the gospel. It sounds so easy, doesn't it? It would have been easy for Herod. But pride is the root of all sorts.

It's the very center of so many sins. It's the sin back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3.

The idolatry of self. The pride of man. So as we kind of close our time, for us, as a church, we remain steadfast in death or injustice, in confusion or clarity, and in even radical once-in-a-lifetime acts of God through whatever means God has made it so in our lives.

[47 : 36] In death or injustice of us or beloved friends, in confusion or clarity of what God is doing, and even those radical once-in-a-lifetime even angelic interventions in our lives, the church remains steadfast.

Why? Because we trust a steadfast God. God. And He is sovereign over it all. The effect of God's sovereignty, verse 24, but the word of God increased and multiplied.

It's right here, church. It's right here. Verse 25 brings in Barnabas and Saul returning to Jerusalem after they completed their work in Antioch.

Bring it with them John, whose other name is Mark. I hear that song and the beat goes on.

And guess what? The beat is still going on today. Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord from doing what He wills?

[48 : 55] take it a bit deeper. Who can stop the church? Who can stop us? Here we remain. And here we will remain until we continue our series again in the book of Acts.

The unstoppable word of God is carried by an unstoppable church because God is unstoppable. unstoppable. We have to remember this.

So a couple encouragements. May we be a church steadfast in a hostile world who hates God. If the world needs peace, we point to the peace giver.

If the world needs faith, we point to the faith giver. If the world needs healing, we point to the healer.

If the world needs rescued, we point to the rescuer.

If the world needs assurance and hope, we point to the promise keeper. If the world needs clarity, we point to the illuminator. If the world needs answers, we open this thing because every answer the world questions and seeks is found here.

[50 : 17] all we need is found in the Bible alone. God is sovereign and sovereign. He will continue through all eternity. It's the source of our trust and a reminder to us to find joy in every season, whether it's for our benefit or our demise.

This is a wake of call for us to apprehend today and to remind ourselves of tomorrow. May we sense the shockwave that continues today that once hit Jerusalem.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.