

The Church - Acts 12:1-25 - Escaping the Impossible!

Talking Notes

The Pilate stone is a damaged block (82 cm x 65 cm) of **carved** limestone with a partially intact inscription attributed to, and mentioning, Pontius Pilate, a prefect of the Roman province of Judaea from AD 26 to 36. It was discovered at the archaeological site of Caesarea Maritima in 1961.

To the Divine Augusti (this) Tiberieum
... Pontius Pilate
... prefect of Judea
... has dedicated (this)

The limestone block was **discovered** in June 1961 by Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Antonio Frova while excavating in the area of an ancient theatre built by decree of Herod the Great around 22–10 BC, along with the entire city of Caesarea.

How many times is Pilate mentioned in the New Testament - 56 X

Acts 12:1-25

1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place. 18 In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. 19 After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while. 20 He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

21 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. 22 They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." 23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of God continued to increase and spread.

25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. NIV

1 Peter 3:8-12

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For,

"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.

11 He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,

but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." NIV

Ps 34:15-16

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their cry;

16 the face of the Lord is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth. NIV

Introduction

I. Tension and Key Figures

- A. Tension is growing between the Jewish People and Christians.
- B. It has been about 11 years since has been crucified and raised from the dead.
- C. Major Figures in the story.
 - 1. Herod Agrippa I (Called King Herod - this is not Herod the Great)
 - 2. James the Son of Zebedee.
 - 3. Simon Peter
 - 4. The Church at Jerusalem

II. What this chapter has.

- A. It has arrogance an egocentric behavior from a bad King.
- B. It has sadness and tragedy -the death of James
- C. It has the miraculous deliverance of Peter from Jail.
- D. It has humor (praying church couldn't believe their prayers were answered).

Body of the Message

I. King Herod

- A. Herod the Great, information about him.
 - 1. Appointed ruler by Marc Anthony.
 - 2. Reigned 37 - 4 BC (Jesus was born 6 - 4 BC)
 - 3. Aspects of his reign.
 - a) He was a builder
 - (1) Temple of Jerusalem - rebuilt it. Began in 19 BC - completed 64 AD.
 - (a) How big is the temple
 - (2) Caesarea (Pilate Stone)
 - (3) Fortress at Masada,
 - (4) and Herodium
 - (5) Many large public buildings.
 - b) He was a bully.
 - (1) Insanely Jealous and insecure.
 - (2) When he took over - he killed 45 of the Jewish Priests that were in the Sanhedrin.
 - (3) Killed his favorite wife, Mariamne I - and her two brothers Aristobulus and Alexander. They were Hasmonean and rightful heirs to throne.
 - (a) He was a psychopath.

- (b) He is like Ivan the Terrible in Russian History.
- (4) He was the one that slaughtered the innocents during the Christmas story. When the Magi came to visit - where is he who is King of the Jews? Man that really pushed his buttons.

Matt 2:1-3

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. NIV

Matt 2:7-8

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." NIV

Matt 2:16-17

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. NIV

- (5) He was insecure - mean autocrats in history are usually very insecure.
- (a) Rejected by Jews because he was not an Hasmonean - was a descendent of Esau.
- (b) Married a princess Mariamne, Hasmonean.
- (c) Her brother was Aristobulus, rightful Heir - Herod drowned him at Jericho.
- (6) Killed two of his sons, five days before he died he ordered Antipater his son to be executed. The other son that he killed was Aristobulus (the father ironically of Agrippa I).
- (a) "Better to be Herod's hog than his son." Caesar Augustus.
- (b) He is a ruthless King that will destroy anyone that threatens he lust for power and control.
- (7) He had the Hippodrome (race track) filled with Jewish leaders and he gave the order that when he died they were to be executed, the reason is he wanted people crying when he died.

Prov 29:2 When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan. NIV

“One of Herod’s most famous crimes in the purpose was, when he was on his deathbed, to command that “the principle men of the entire Jewish nation” should come into his presence, whom he then shut up in the hippodrome and surrounded them by soldiers, and order the immediately after his own death, which he expected soon, that they might seemingly, at least, afford “an honorable mourning at his funeral!” The royal wretch died, but the order was not carried out.” Unger’s B. Dictionary, 472.

B. Who was this Herod Agrippa I?

Acts 12:1-3

1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 **He had James, the brother of John,** put to death with the sword. 3 **When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also.** This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. NIV

Note - he saw that this was to his political advantage he arrested Peter - this gives us insight into how his mind works.

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod called ‘the Great’, had grown up in imperial circles in Rome. He was a friend of the third emperor, the mad Caligula, and had contrived to aid Caligula’s successor, Claudius, in the vital matter of his elevation to the principate. Hence the addition of Judea and Samaria to the territory which Caligula had granted him. This was the tetrarchy of Philip (Lk. iii: 1), later extended by the furtherer assignment of Galilee and Peraea, the old domain of Herod Antipas. The title of ‘king’ accompanied Caligula’s appointment. Notorious in Rome for this prodigality and extravagance, in Judea Herod posed as a champion of the Law. The attack on the Church was no doubt a policy move to gratify and conciliate the old Pharisaic and Sadducean enemies of the Church. Tyndale Commentary, 99.

Agrippa's territory comprised most of modern Israel, including Judea, Galilee, Batanaea and Perea. From Galilee his territory extended east to Trachonitis.

1. Not Herod the Great, that was his grandfather. This is Herod Agrippa I - the grandson of Herod the Great - his grandfather Herod the great had his father, Aristobulus killed.
 - a) Herod Agrippa I - parents were Aristobulus (whom Herod had killed) and Bernice.
 - (1) What does that do to you psychologically if your grandfather kills your
 - (2) father? That can’t be good.
 - (3) **Queen Elizabeth - her father Henry the VIII killed her mother Ann Boleyn**
2. He was a nephew of Herod Antipas that killed the John the Baptist.

3. He was educated in Rome and was close friends with Caligula and Claudias.
 - a) How he got to be King or ruler was he was riding in the chariot one day with Caligula and he said you should be Emperor instead of Tiberius and the chariot driver told Tiberius and Herod Agrippa I was put in jail. A bit later Tiberius died and was the day after he died Caligula became Emperor and summoned Agrippa I the first and gave him is reign.
 - b) Other things that he does.
4. He did favors for important people to get things from them that were to his advantage.
 - a) Every relationship was calculated to extract from that relationship something for his own benefit.
 - b) He used people for his own benefit.
 - c) He was a smoozer.
 - d) He uses relationships to advance his own cause.
 - (1) He did what people liked in order to get their favor in order to have them do things for him or to advance his own cause.
 - (a) This is how he operates.
 - (b) He does things to get things from other people.
 - (c) He does favors to get favor.
 - (2) Every things that he does has a hidden agenda.
 - (3) There is a hook in every favor.
 - (4) Every act of service an IOU attached.
 - e) He appears to care for others but in reality he really cares for himself.
5. Application
 - a) Is an act of love really an act of love is it has a hidden agenda.
 - b) In other words if I appear to be doing something that looks like love but I am doing it to get something back is it really love? Scripture would say no! Love is not self-seeking.

1 Cor 13:4-8 - particularly verse 6

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. NIV

zeteo - to plot or to scheme

- c) We should learn to do things for others without attaching an invisible IOU.
6. Illustrations
 - a) Let someone into traffic, the obligatory wave.
 - b) Coke Machine - anger if the machine doesn't give you back something.

Coke Machine illustration

Letting People in traffic

7. Supportive scriptures and Quotes

Rom 12:9

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. NIV

Rom 12:9

9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. KJV

Dissimulation - the act of **dissimulating**; feigning; hypocrisy. Dictionary. com. dissimulating means - to disguise or conceal under a false appearance; dissemble:

Luke 14:12-14

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." NIV

**“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.”
— John Bunyan**

Heb 6:10

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. NIV

8. There is a reward for doing nice things for people, for serving. Two forms.

- a) When you help others you help yourself. **“You cannot help another person without helping yourself.” Proverbs 11:25 Refreshing others**
- b) **God rewards you - he will not forget your labor of love. God is a debtor to no man.**

(1) You sow in one field and reap in another field.

(2) Cast your bread upon the waters and it will come back to you again.

Ecclesiastes 11:1

9. Illustrations - the traffic favor but not wave, the coke machine analogy.

10. **Love is not self seeking, 1 Cor. 13:5, Romans 12:9.**

11. Key Statements about doing favors to get favors.

- a) He did favors to get favors. His relationships were all based on a give and exchange principle.
 - b) He was a smoozer and knew how to flatter and be nice and supportive of the people that could help him climb the political ladder.
 - c) Every thing he did had an invisible IOU attached.
 - d) Herod is always doing things with an expectation that is attached.
 - e) I wonder if love is really love if when you do a loving thing you are expecting to get something back and you are upset if you don't get something back.
 - f) Herod Agrippa I lived his life always doing favors for people waiting to get something back in return.
 - g) Every act done for another person had an IOU attached to it.
 - h) He lived by the creed I did this for you what will you do for me?
12. Key Statements:
- a) Remember - you cannot help others without helping yourself.
 - b) You sow in one field and reap in another field.
13. Scriptures

Proverbs 11:25

25 A generous man will prosper;
 he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. NIV (see Luke 6:38)

Ecclesiastes 11:1

11 Cast your bread upon the waters,
 for after many days you will find it again. NIV

II. James

- A. This is James the son of Zebedee, his brother is John
 - 1. His calling by Jesus. (they were with their father when Jesus called them, left their future prospects of being in business with their father)

Mark 1:16-20

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. NIV

Matt 4:21-22

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. NIV

2. Jesus called he and his brother John the sons of Thunder.

Mark 3:16-19

16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. NIV

Luke 9:51-56

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village. NIV

3. Simple Fishermen - Capernaum, probably friends with Andrew and Peter
- a) They were the first of the called disciples of Jesus.
 - b) James is the first Apostle Martyred, Stephen was the first christian martyred.
- B. James and John came to Jesus to ask about being seated at his right and his left when the kingdom came.

Mark 10:35-40

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." NIV

Luke 12:49-51

49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 **But I have a baptism to undergo,** and how distressed I am until it is completed! 51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. NIV

Matt 20:20-23

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

21 "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. **"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"**

"We can," they answered.

23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." NIV

- C. What made this fishermen be willing to die, to literally be beheaded for his faith. Don't miss this, why would a fishermen from Galilee be willing to give their lives fully for Jesus?

III. Peter (sleeping on airplanes)

Acts 12:4-6

4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by **four squads of four soldiers each.** Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, **Peter was sleeping** between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. NIV

Acts 5:17-20

17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 **But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail** and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." NIV

- A. Peter was in an impossible situation yet he was sleeping.
1. God can give you peace in the midst of something very challenging.
 2. The future was uncertain.
 - a) I don't believe Peter knew he was going to be set free.
 - b) He believed that God was in control.
 - (1) I like to sleep on airplanes, I can sleep because there is an expert pilot flying the plane.
 - (2) God is an expert regarding your future.
 - (3) Where did Peter learn how to sleep in a scary situation?

Mark 4:36-41

he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" NIV

3. It is not God's will for us to be filled with apprehension about the future.
 - a) Anxiety is imagining a moment in the future when God is not at your side.
 - b) Imagine, whatever you are anxious about, that God is standing beside you when you are in that situation.

Phil 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. NIV

4. Illustrations about Peter Sleeping and having Peace/ Freedom from Anxiety

Back in Cape Town, we are looking forward to celebrating Christmas in our new building. Not sure if we've told you about the need to redo the staircase because it does not meet the building code — never a dull moment! Sometimes you just need to keep your eyes on the mission — sharing the glorious message of how God so loved the world! - **Muizenberg**

The other day I decided to take an early morning run. I always jog with several pages of Scriptures in my hand to read and meditate on. There is a lot of crime in this area of

Muizenberg, so I'm always thinking about safety. This day I looked up and noticed eight young men walking toward me. To be safe, I decided to turn down another road. A while later I was walking to cool down and turned a corner only to run into the same group. I was going over Proverbs 3:5-6 so I stopped, threw up my right hand with the Scriptures in it and yelled, "Gentlemen, I have some **Good News** in my hand that has come from the Bible!" They all stopped and stared at me so I asked, "Have you ever read the Bible?" **"Do you ever worry?" They all replied yes to worrying.** I began to quote from Proverbs — "Trust in the **LORD** with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." As I spoke about the wonders of trusting God with all your heart, their eyes lit up like a light bulb.

Jesus called people who needed REST from anxiety, uneasiness and worry. They came by the numbers to Jesus, the Great Physician. After sharing with them for about ten minutes, I prayed for them and walked off.

Ten steps later, one of them said, "Pastor?" I turned around to answer. He had stopped and with bright eyes said, "Thank you, thank you!" Oh what joy it brings to share the glorious message of how **God so loved the world!**

Muizenberg (Afrikaans for "mice mountain") is a beach-side suburb of **Cape Town, South Africa**

Prov 3:5-6

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight. NIV

Hi Danny you can use anything I speak or write that is not a problem. I will look and see if I have any jogging pictures I am sure I do.

Have a great day. Come see me if you would like to meet some of the nicest murders you will ever meet. They are desperate with no education or trade they think crime is the only way out. They love preachers. We work with them two days a week.

Thanks for writing Danny.

dirkwood

5. **College Students are stressed more than ever - the number one reason counseling services at college is for anxiety.**

Over the last decade, **anxiety has overtaken depression as the most common reason college students seek counseling services.** In its annual survey of students, the American College Health Association found a significant increase—to **62 percent**

in 2016 from 50 percent in 2011 — of undergraduates reporting "overwhelming anxiety" in the previous year.

Surveys that look at symptoms related to anxiety are also telling. In 1985, the Higher Education Research Institute at U.C.L.A. began asking incoming college freshmen if they "felt overwhelmed by all I had to do" during the previous year. In 1985, 18 percent said they did. By 2010, that number had increased to 29 percent. Last year, it surged to 41 percent.

For many of these young people, the biggest single stressor is that they "never get to the point where they can say, 'I've done enough, and now I can stop,'" [one expert] says. "There's always one more activity, one more A.P. class, one more thing to do in order to get into a top college. Kids have a sense that they're not measuring up. The pressure is relentless and getting worse."

Amazon Tracks the Most Highlighted Verse in the Bible

In *Worry Less, Live More*, Robert J. Morgan illustrates the fact that many in society are very conscious of anxiety:

Amazon keeps track of your highlights. When e-book owners mark sentences, the online retailer knows and notes it. Recently Amazon released a list of the most popular passages in some of its bestselling books, such as *The Hunger Games*, the Harry Potter series, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Also released, the most highlighted passage in the Holy Bible. I expected America's favorite biblical portion to be John 3:16, Psalm 23, or the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. But, no, it was a less prominent text, but one that's striking a deep cord in today's worried world. It was **Philippians 4:6-7**:
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Robert J. Morgan, *Worry Less, Live More* (Thomas Nelson, 2017), page xiii

It is scary what amazon knows about you. They know that you are here right now.

Phil 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. NIV

Phil 4:6-7

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ESV

Phil 4:6-7

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. **Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.** 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. New Living Translation

Phil 4:6-7

6 **Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray.** Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. 7 Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. THE MESSAGE

Worry or anxiety comes from the greek word **to pull apart** (a house divided cannot stand, Matthew 12:25)

Drawn and quartered execution

Martha Stressed because of everything she had to do. She got mad at Mary. The more we keep looking at Jesus the calmer we are. (Like Peter looking at the waves)

Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.** 40 **But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.** She came to him and asked, **"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?"** Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."NIV

Sight and Sound scene - Jesus said "calm down Martha I have never liked your cooking anyhow."

- B. What seems impossible is not impossible with God.
 - 1. Peter had 16 soldiers assigned to guard him. They worked on shifts. 2 were always chained to him. 2 were always guarding the door.
 - a) This was because that earlier they had put the apostles in Jail and they miraculously were delivered.

Acts 5:17-20

17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 **But during the night an**

angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." NIV

- b) Why does Luke go into such vivid detail about the nature of Peter's incarceration? It is to show how impossible the situation was that he was in.
 - (1) Our challenging situation doesn't mean that hope is gone there isn't anyway.
 - (2) God delights to move when things look absolutely impossible.
- 2. Key statements
 - a) **"Impossible Circumstances Are Where God's Glory Shines the Brightest."** Sarah Walton
 - b)
- 3. Biblical examples
 - a) The red sea analogy (or reed sea - sea of reeds)

Heb 11:29

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. NIV

Ex 14:10-28

10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. 17 I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

19 Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved

from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 24 During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. 25 He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." 27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. 28 The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen — the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. NIV

- b) 3 Hebrews thrown into the fiery furnace **Daniel 3:23** cf.
- c) **Daniel and Lion's den.**

Dan 6:15-28

15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed." 16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land:

"May you prosper greatly!

26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

"For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. 27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." 28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. NIV

Charles Stanley / Daniel and Lion's Den

He was about 30 and she was about 70 so he felt pretty safe.

Picture - Daniel had his hands behind his back and was looking up.

He wasn't looking at the lions he was looking at the Lord.

4. Zechariah and Elizabeth

Luke 1:11-20

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." NIV

Luke 1:57-66

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. NIV

5. Illustration of God delivering us from an impossible situation.

IV. The Church

Acts 12:5

5 So Peter was kept in prison, **but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.** NIV

Acts 12:12-16

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to **the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark,** where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. NIV

- A. We put all this emphasis on faith but you can't accuse these people of having great faith.
 - 1. God is going to do what he is going to do. His purposes are going to stand.
 - a) "God is going to do what he is going to do rather you have faith or not."
Chuck Smith
 - b) I believe our times are in God's hand.
 - c) God's sovereignty will always trump our feeble faith.
 - (1) As far as God was concerned it was time for James to come home.
 - (2) All of our lives our bond within the purposes of God.
 - 2. God's purposes are not inhibited by our weak faith.
 - 3. We should pray when we are in trouble.
- B. Their faith was not perfect but yet God worked even though their faith was faulty.
 - 1. The illusion of us having to have everything perfect for God to work.
 - 2. If I could just perfect my faith God would do the miracle I want him to.

Extra Material

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."
— John Bunyan

The account of King Agrippa's death is told by Flavius Josephus:

"Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea [...] There he exhibited shows in honor of the emperor [...] On the second day of the festival, Herod put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a truly wonderful contexture, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment was illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it. It shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him. At that moment, his flatterers cried out [...] that he was a god; and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.'

Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and he fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, 'I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by

death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.'

After he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign." (Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 19.343-350).

Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu, was a first-century Romano-Jewish scholar, historian and hagiographer, who was born in Jerusalem—then part of Roman Judea—to a father of priestly descent and a mother who claimed royal ancestry.

[Wikipedia](#)

Born: 37 AD, [Jerusalem, Israel](#)

Died: 100 AD, [Rome, Italy](#)

Full name: Yosef ben Matityahu

Movies: [Salomé](#)

Parents: [Mattathias ben Theophilus](#), [Matthias](#)

"This fortress, which is some sixty [stadia](#)^[11] distant from Jerusalem, is naturally strong and very suitable for such a structure, for reasonably nearby is a hill, raised to a (greater) height by the hand of man and rounded off in the shape of a breast. At intervals it has round towers, and it has a steep ascent formed of two hundred steps of hewn stone. Within it are costly royal apartments made for security and for ornament at the same time. At the base of the hill there are pleasure grounds built in such a way as to be worth seeing, among other things because of the way in which water, which is lacking in that place, is brought in from a distance and at great expense. The surrounding plain was built up as a city second to none, with the hill serving as an acropolis for the other dwellings." ([The Jewish War](#) I, 21, 10; [Antiquities of the Jews](#) XIV, chapter 13.9).