

We Will Get Through This

ACTS 12

Acts 12:1-17 (NLT)

1 About that time King Herod Agrippa began to **persecute some believers in the church**. 2 He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. 3 When Herod saw how much **this pleased the Jewish people**, he also arrested Peter. 4 Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover.

5 But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

6 The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, **he was asleep**, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. 7 Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, **"Quick! Get up!"** And the chains fell off his wrists. 8 Then the angel told him, **"Get dressed and put on your sandals."** And he did. **"Now put on your coat and follow me,"** the angel ordered. 9 So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. 10 They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. 11 Peter finally came to his senses. **"It's really true!"** he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!"

12 When he realized this, **he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer**. 13 He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, **she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone**, "Peter is standing at the door!" 15 **"You're out of your mind!"** they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." 16 Meanwhile, **Peter continued knocking**. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. 17 He motioned for them to quiet down and **told them how the Lord had led him out of prison**. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

Introduction

We are dealing with some difficult times...

Continuous Natural Disasters

Global Pandemic

Police Brutality

Political Division

Racism

Gun Violence

Mental Health Crisis

*This cycle of continuous chaos has many believers drained, discouraged, and defeated
These situations and circumstances have caused many people to echo the words....*

“If It Ain’t One Thing.... It’s Another

Is there an end in site?

But the Good News is...

*Regardless of what we face as a **Believer**... Our **Faith** in God gives us **Hope***

THAT WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS...

***Acts 12** gives us some key principles to persevere through these problems*

Principle #1 ~ Expect With Growth Comes Persecution

The early church experienced tremendous growth because of their
Faithfulness to the Word of God ~Dedication to the Fellowship Among Believers ~ Devotion to God

Acts 2:41 (NLT)

41 Those who **believed** what Peter said were baptized and **added to the church** that day about **3,000 in all**.

Acts 2:47 (NLT)

47 All the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.
And each day **the Lord added to their fellowship** those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4 (NLT)

4 But many of the people who **heard their message believed it**, so the number of **believers** now totaled about **5,000 men, not counting women and children**.

Acts 5:14-16 (NLT)

14 Yet **more and more people believed** and were brought to the Lord—**crowds of both men and women**.

Acts 6:1 (NLT)

1 But as the **believers rapidly multiplied**, there were rumblings of discontent.

Acts 6:7 (NLT)

7 So God's message continued to spread. **The number of believers greatly increased** in Jerusalem...

Acts 9:31 (NLT)

31 The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger **as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord**. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, **it also grew in numbers**.

Principle #1 ~ Expect With Growth Comes Persecution

We see the tremendous growth and with growth comes jealousy and envy

Acts 4:2 (NLT)

2 These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead.

Acts 5:17-18 (NLT)

17 The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.

18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

Acts 6:8-11 (NLT)

8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.

9 But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, started to debate with him. 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

11 So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen...

Jesus ~ Religious Leaders Plotted to kill him

Joseph ~ Brothers Plotted to kill him

David ~ King Saul Plotted to kill him

You are not any different....

Because you are growing and maturing, the enemy will PLOT to take you out....

Principle #1 ~ Expect With Growth Comes Persecution

This is not a new tactic from the enemy

Exodus 1:6-12 (NLT)

6 In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation.

*7 But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. **In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.***

*8 Eventually, **a new king came to power in Egypt** who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done.*

*9 He said to his people, **“Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are.***

*10 **We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more.** If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country.”*

11 So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities as supply centers for the king.

*12 **But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became.***

Principle #2 ~ Don't Focus On Fighting People ~ Focus On The Problem

Acts 12:1-3 (NLT)

1 About that time **King Herod Agrippa** began to persecute some believers in the church. 2 He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. 3 When **Herod** saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter.

Same Problem ~ Different Person

- **Herod the Great** – had all little ones killed in Bethlehem while seeking Jesus
 - **Herod Antipas** – Beheaded John the Baptist
 - **Herod Agrippa I** – Killed James and has plans to kill Peter

Getting Rid of **THE PERSON** may not be the solution to the problem
There was **A SYSTEM OF CORRUPTION** that needed to be destroyed

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

12 For we are not **fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies**, but against **evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world**, against **mighty powers in this dark world**, and against **evil spirits in the heavenly places**.

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

8 Stay alert! Watch out for **YOUR GREAT ENEMY**, the devil.
He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Principle #2 ~ Don't Focus On Fighting People ~ Focus On The Problem

Acts 12:3 (NLT)

3 When **Herod** saw how much **this pleased the Jewish people**, he also arrested Peter.

There will always be the Visible Enemy

*Herod is the one that people heard and saw
He is the one that has the Position
He is the one that Leads the Charge
But don't think he is the only one.....*

There will always be the "Behind The Scenes Enemy"

*The leader will always have a base that he has to please
This is true in every form of leadership*

Mark 15:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Then Pilate said to them, "**Why, what evil has He done?**" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!"
15 So Pilate, **wanting to gratify the crowd**, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

*This is why we need leaders who **STAND ON PRINCIPLES** rather than **SERVE AS PUPPETS***

Acts 5:28-29 (NKJV)

28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said:
"We ought to obey God rather than men."

Principle #3 ~ Utilize The Power Of Prayer In The Midst of Persecution

Acts 12:5 (NKJV)

*5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer** was offered to God for him by the church.*

Psalm 34:17 (NKJV)

17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.

James 5:16 (NKJV)

16 The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much {makes things happen}

2 Chronicles 7:15 (NKJV)

15 Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

Philippians 4:6 (NKJV)

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Pray With Expectation

Acts 12:13-16 (NKJV)

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

*15 But they said to her, "**You are beside yourself!**" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "**It is his angel.**"*

*16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, **they were astonished.***

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Acts 12:5-6 (NKJV)

5 Peter was therefore **KEPT IN PRISON**, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. 6 And **when Herod was about to bring him out**, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

DIVINE PROTECTION

The enemy plans to kill Peter ~ He is **KEPT UNTIL** his **TIME OF DELIVERANCE**
God has a way of **HIDING US** from dangers seen and unseen ~ **even in unfavorable places**

1 Samuel 22:1 (NKJV)

1 David therefore departed from there and **escaped to the cave of Adullam**. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.

1 Kings 17:3 (NKJV)

3 "Get away from here and turn eastward, and **hide by the Brook Cherith**, which flows into the Jordan.

God waits until the night Herod was planning to execute Peter to deliver him

Why so late? God's ways are not our ways...

Don't get sidetracked by the Timing, Trust God's Promise

Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)

17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper...

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Acts 12:7-10 (NLT)

7 Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, “**Quick! Get up!**” And **the chains fell off his wrists.**

8 Then the angel told him, “**Get dressed and put on your sandals.**” And he did. “**Now put on your coat and follow me,**” the angel ordered. 9 So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn’t realize it was actually happening. 10 They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and **this opened for them all by itself.** So they passed through and started walking down the street, and **then the angel suddenly left him.**

Divine Instructions

Many people **desire divine deliverance** without following **Divine Instructions**
God will always send a **Divine Message** with **Instructions for Deliverance**

Walk Around The Wall ~ Blow The Trumpet
Stretch Out Your Rod ~ Strike The Rock ~ Speak To The Rock
Dip In The Jordan ~ Go Wash In The Pool

Humble Yourself and Pray, Seek My Face, Turn From Your Wicked Ways.... THEN I will hear and heal...
Seek First The Kingdom of God....
Don’t Worry About Tomorrow....

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Acts 12:7-10 (NLT)

7 Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, “**Quick! Get up!**” And **the chains fell off his wrists.**

8 Then the angel told him, “**Get dressed and put on your sandals.**” And he did. “**Now put on your coat and follow me,**” the angel ordered. 9 So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn’t realize it was actually happening. 10 They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and **this opened for them all by itself.** So they passed through and started walking down the street, and **then the angel suddenly left him.**

Divine Intervention

If **YOU DO THE NATURAL** GOD WILL DO THE **SUPERNATURAL**

Specialize In The Simple

You Get Up {**Natural**} ~ Chains Fell Off His Wrists {**Supernatural**}
Get Dressed, follow Me {**Natural**} ~ The Gates Open By Itself {**Supernatural**}

There are some things God will do.... There are some things you can do for yourself

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Acts 12:6 (NKJV)

6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night **PETER WAS SLEEPING**, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

Human Expectation

Peter had **FAITH THAT GOD** would Deliver

He is sleep in the midst of danger ~ **He is not worrying**, He is not tossing and turning
He **TRUSTS** what God has Said...

John 21:18-19 (NKJV)

18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; **but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.**" 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

Peter learned how to Take God At His Word

Also the enemy was **EXPECTING** God to do something....

Bound with two chains.... between two soldiers.... Guards at the doorto make sure he don't escape...

That's why the enemy brings so much against you.... Even he knows you have greatness on your life

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Acts 12:8 (NKJV)

8 Then the angel said to him, "*Gird yourself and tie on your sandals*"; and so he did.
And he said to him, "*Put on your garment* and follow me."

Come Out With Your Head Held High

Many people are simply content with JUST COMING OUT ANY KIND OF WAY...

God not only brings us out...but he *GETS US READY FOR EXIT*

There are times when God allows us to go through things and we don't *look like* we lost anything...

Daniel 3:27 (NLT)

27 Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that *the fire had not touched them*.
Not a hair on their heads was singed, and *their clothing was not scorched*. *They didn't even smell of smoke!*

2 Samuel 12:19-20 (NLT)

19 When David saw them whispering, he realized what had happened. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." 20 Then David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. He went to the Tabernacle and worshiped the LORD. After that, he returned to the palace and was served food and ate.

Acts 16:35-37 (NKJV)

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "*Let those men go*."
36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, and have thrown us into prison.
And now do they put us out secretly?

NO INDEED! LET THEM COME THEMSELVES AND GET US OUT."

Principle #5 ~ God Always Has The Last Word

Acts 12:21-24 (NKJV)

21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.

22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED.

The Enemy may seem like he is getting away with persecuting the People of God

The Enemy may seem like he is destroying God's Plan and Purpose

The Enemy may seem like he is diminishing the growth of God's Church

BUT GOD ALWAYS HAS THE LAST WORD

Remember This....

Principle #1 ~ Expect With Growth Comes Persecution

Principle #2 ~ Don't Focus On Fighting People ~ Focus On The Problem

Principle #3 ~ Utilize The Power Of Prayer In The Midst of Persecution

Principle #4 ~ Understand Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Principle #5 ~ God Always Has The Last Word