

Sermon Date: December 1, 2013
Acts 12:1-25 – Peter’s Deliverance in Jerusalem
Doug McBride

Read Acts 12:1-25

1. In Acts 12:1-2, the author Luke records the death of James, one of the very important 12 disciples/Apostles (See Matthew 4:21-22, 10:1-4, 26:36-38). This is important for two reasons:
 - a. This is the first of the 12 disciples/Apostles to be martyred. It is believed that most all of the 12 eventually met their death through martyrdom.
 - b. The persecution of the early Christians was no longer limited to Jewish leaders, but has now become political. In other words, church persecution has been taken to a whole new level. Christians were no longer considered a threat to the just Jewish leadership, but were also now considered a threat to the political kingdom as well.

See Mark 10:39 and comment.

2. How does Herod strike at the church (v. 1-5)?

- a. What does verse 3 say about Herod’s arrest of Peter?

3. What is the church’s immediate response to Peter’s imprisonment (v. 5)?

- a. Doug mentions that the word “fervently” used in verse 5 is from the same Greek word used of Jesus praying in Gethsemane (see Luke 22:44). The Greek term means: earnestly, fervently, intensely, stretched-out, resolute, tense. See Luke 22:44 to get a sense of Jesus’ fervent prayer.
- b. Has there been a time in your life when you have prayed “fervently” or intensely such as this?

4. What is Peter’s response to being set free (v. 9 & 11)?

5. How do the believers who were gathered to pray for Peter respond when Peter is set free?
6. Why do you think the gathered believers have trouble believing that their prayers have been answered?
7. Doug made the following observation about prayer and faith in context of this story: “At times we are caught off guard when it comes to prayer and faith. **Faith is measured by its mere existence, not by its amount.** If you have any stretch of faith, give it to God. Even if 99% of you does not believe your prayers will be answered, that 1% is all you need. All day long God is faced with a world that completely ignores Him. I assure you we stick out to God, even in our futility.”
- a. Comment on what this means to you. What does this say about you?
 - b. Has there ever been a time in your life when the only amount of faith you could muster was 1%? How did it work out?
8. Why did God rescue Peter and not James?

Doug made the following “Anchor Points” for us to consider:

Peter and James: both disciples on the ground floor with Jesus and integral to the faith. Both were being prayed for. God rescues Peter but does not rescue James. And at the end of the day we don't have the faintest idea why. We may be tempted to say “God is not answering the prayers for James.” We might be tempted to say “God is not answering my prayers.” The contrast in this passage is not necessarily between James and Peter, rather it is between Peter and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three times Jesus asked the Father ‘if there is any way get Me out of this – yet let Your will be done.’ And Jesus dies. It looks like an unanswered prayer. Peter gets out of prison. Jesus dies. And the world has the blood of Jesus available for salvation – for the forgiveness of sins for all of eternity.

And we are left asking ourselves “Is God good?”