

June 30, 2024

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing
The Book of Acts Pt15 Acts 12:1-25
The Church: On Mission, In Prayer... Unstoppable

Video – Unstoppable God by Elevation Worship

Today's message is about our Unstoppable God and His Unstoppable Church. In today's world it may seem that evil is winning and the Church is on it's way out...but that is NOT TRUE. We can't listen to the naysayers and God haters... We have hope! Listen to a few Bible verses to back this up...

Deuteronomy 20:1-4...¹*When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.* ²*When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army.* ³*He shall say: "Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them.* ⁴*For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."*

Job 42:2...*"I know that you can do everything and that your plans are unstoppable.*

2 Chronicles 32:8... *He may have a great army, but they are merely men. We have the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles for us!"* Hezekiah's words greatly encouraged the people.

Matthew 16:18b...*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

John 16:32,33... ³²*Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* ³³*These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, (trials and troubles) but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

We serve an UNSTOPPABLE GOD Who has called us to be His UNSTOPPABLE WITNESSES & MINISTERS.

Let's take a look at today's passage from Acts 12:1-25...Luke, the author, takes another personal encounter story to teach the Church, then & now, that we must **BE ON MISSION** and **STAY ON MISSION**, no matter what may come. Remember, God Has promised us in **Deuteronomy 31:8**... *The LORD (YHWH) Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

SCENE 1 of this Amazing Good News Story!

Acts 12:1-6... *¹Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. ²And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well. (Now these were the days of Unleavened Bread.) ⁴When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, turning him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending only after the Passover to bring him before the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made to God fervently and intensely by the church. ⁶On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.*

Let's stop here for a moment put ourselves in the story and see what applications and lessons we can learn.

Imagine yourself there in Jerusalem in the mid 40's AD, a 'Believer in Jesus, a member of 'The Way' a 'Christian', where any one of those labels could land you in prison or worse stoned. (remember Stephen).
"Herod Agrippa I = ultimate politician – "the fool who fights God" – characterized thus by MacArthur is in power.

- Sensitive to the popularity polls and tried to gain favor however he could
- Driven by expediency in his actions
- No problem abusing his power without concern for justice and righteousness

- Cruel in his treatment of those who posed any type of threat to his status
- Puffed up in the pride of his own power and importance to think that he could oppose God

Stott: He must have been well informed about Jesus and his followers, for his uncle Antipas had known and tried Jesus (Lk 23:7ff).

Wiersbe: This evil man was the grandson of Herod the Great, who ordered the Bethlehem children to be murdered, and the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded.

Kent: This was Peter's third arrest (4:3, 5:18), and remembrance of his previous deliverance from prison (5:19), may have caused extra precautions to be taken. He was put in the care of four squads of four soldiers each. The usual procedure would call for them to serve three-hour watches, with two soldiers chained to the prisoner and two guarding the door".

<https://www.bibleoutlines.com/acts-1127-1225-unstoppable-advance-of-gods-kingdom/>

Imagine again you meet another 'secret' believer who pulls you aside and says.

*"“Have you heard the news? Herod beheaded James!”
“No way! Not James! He was one of the inner circle with Jesus! Peter, James, and John. I thought for sure that God would protect James!” “But that’s not all. The latest polls show that Herod’s approval rating went up after he killed James. So now he also has Peter in custody. Word has it that tomorrow, after the feast is over, he is going to execute him! There’s a prayer meeting tonight at Mary’s house” Are you coming?”*

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-30-unstoppable-gospel-acts-121-25>

Lesson No.1:

1. God Is Almighty And All-Powerful, However Troubling Things Still Happen To His People.

“There are times when evil seems to be winning the day. Wicked men get away with murder and their popularity goes up, not down. The righteous suffer terribly. Their loved ones are bereaved. It’s easy at such times to wonder, “Where is God in all of this? Why did He allow this to happen? How can any good come out of such awful wickedness?” James and John had been close. They had worked together in their father’s fishing business. They had spent three years in close contact with Jesus. They had hopes and dreams of how God would use them in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. But now, James was suddenly gone. John was left wondering, “Why?” At the beginning of [Acts 12](#), we have James dead, Peter in prison, and the tyrant Herod basking in his popularity and power. At the end of the chapter, we have Peter free, Herod eaten by worms and dead, and the Word of God growing and multiplying. Luke is showing us that the gospel is unstoppable. If you oppose the gospel, you may temporarily win, but you will finally lose and lose big. If you stand for the gospel, you may temporarily lose, but you will finally win and win big”. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-30-unstoppable-gospel-acts-121-25>

Matthew 5:10-12... ¹⁰ *“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* ¹¹ *“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.”* ¹² *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* ¹³ *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people.”* ¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;”* ¹⁵ *nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, it gives light to all who are in the house.”* ¹⁶ *Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 5:46b... *for He (God the Father) causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

This fact may be troubling to some Christians, probably most Christians at some point in life. We sometime laser focus on the verses that say God is our protector and shield yet forget that nearly every key person in the Bible (including Jesus, by the way) suffered in some manner. Sometimes for no reason of their own and other times because of their own disobedience. In this case it was not for their own fault, it was actually because of their

faithfulness to Christ that the early Christians and in this case, Peter found himself in prison.

We must come to a clear though tough understanding...

- The Bible does NOT teach that God will ALWAYS deliver us from tragedy or trouble.
- Contrary to how we may FEEL, God Does NOT LOVE US LESS when He allows tragedy in our lives.
- We must learn to view things from God's eternal perspective and trust that God is in control and will always do what is RIGHT according to His will.

Let's review.. Lesson One... God is Almighty and All-Powerful, However Bad things still happen to

Lesson. No. 2:

Since God is All-Mighty and All-Powerful when trouble comes PRAY and choose PEACE Not Fear

The early church was a powerful and unstoppable church because it was a PRAYING CHURCH! Peter in this passage reminds us that...

Prayer Brings Peace In The Midst Of Persecution

Not just any kind of prayer however, It should be
Fervent, Intense, Consistent and in Faith with
God's Will as the desired result.

Listen again to verse 5... *So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made to God fervently (intensely, consistently) by the church.*

God is more than capable to deliver us 'FROM' or to sustain us 'THROUGH' any trouble. So PRAY, PRAY. PRAY!

Let's look at the SCENE 2: *from Acts 12:7-19*

*Acts 12: 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near Peter, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Put on your belt and strap on your sandals." And he did so. And he *said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 And he went out and continued to follow, and yet he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 Now when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." 12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a slave woman named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. 15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!"*

But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brothers." Then he left and went to another place. ¹⁸ Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.

Lesson No. 3:

Since God is Almighty & All-Powerful, He Can Deliver Us from any situation that He chooses to.

We need to understand that God is the Master Timekeeper, He knows exactly when or when not to act. Our job is to trust and wait in faith. God is glorified when we are the most helpless and totally dependent on Him. Sometimes He waits until the last moment to deliver us, this has the effect of keeping us motivated to pray and deepening our faith.

SCENE 3 of this Good News Story Acts 12: 19-25

¹⁹ When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there. ²⁰ Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one mind they came to him, and having won over

Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was supported with grain from the king's country. ²¹ On an appointed day, after putting on his royal apparel, Herod took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²² The people repeatedly cried out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. ²⁴ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned when they had fulfilled their mission to Jerusalem, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

Lesson No. 4:

Because God Is Almighty & All-Powerful, He Can Remove Even The Most Powerful Of Proud Human Leaders Or Groups.

There's an old song by Patty Griffin that says...

*You can't hide, you can't hide
You can't hide because you don't know how
God's got your number and He knows where you live
Death's got a warrant for you*

Another one that I like is by Johnny Cash...

*You can run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Sooner or later God'll cut you down.*

Well, those songs may seem a little harsh lol, but the point is that the Bible gives us numerous examples and also gives us prophetic warning that God is capable and will execute judgment on those who oppose His will and plans.

Thankfully, those of us who have placed our trust in Jesus and follow God will escape His wrath. Listen to these verses from **Revelation 20:11-15 & Romans 8:1.**

Revelation 20:11-15...Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Romans 8:1...There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Now, that's Good News...Amen... so let's review...

Lesson No.1:

God is Almighty and All-Powerful, However Bad things still happen to His People.

Lesson. No. 2:

Since God is All-Might and All-Powerful when trouble comes PRAY and choose PEACE Not Fear.

Lesson No. 3:

Since God is Almighty & All-Powerful, He Can Deliver Us from any situation that He chooses to.

Lesson No. 4:

Because God Is Almighty & All-Powerful, He Can Remove Even The Most Powerful Of Prideful Human Leaders Or Groups.

Our Take-Away

Our Almighty God is still on His Throne, and He cares for His own through all eternity. So, let come what may – Whatever it be – I can only say That I have God on my side! Therefore, since HE is UNSTOPPABLE so are we! Let the Church Move Forward...Alive & Growing!