

Living out your faith Pt 15

Acts 12:1-25

- Acts 6:7 – the word of the Lord is increasing and people are coming to know the Lord then suddenly Stephen is taken and ultimately killed for his faith. Now another move of God is occurring as gentiles are being saved, the body of Christ is growing both spiritually and numerically. People in the most fleshly and worldly of cities are so impacted by the gospel that they rename those who follow Jesus from – the people of the way – to what is our common name today – Christians. You would think that the more folks get saved the easier it'll get, but you would be wrong. Satan mounts another attack against the body and this time he's looking to give this movement a death blow by killing one of its original members the apostle James.

V1-4

- The Herod mentioned here is not the Herod who killed the innocents in hopes of killing the Messiah, his name was Herod the great, and this is his grandson – Herod Agrippa 1. He was very popular with the Jews because he was known to do everything in his power to keep himself in their favor. So when he realized by harassing and condemning Christianity it would endear him to the Jews he does what many politicians do – the bidding of his supporters. Arresting first James, the brother of John, and had him beheaded. Upon seeing the Jews favorable response he then has Peter arrested planning to kill him also. We see a pattern of how God moves upon the church many are being saved (Acts 11:21); and, that Jew and Gentile are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Then, it seems out of nowhere persecution rises up and believers lose their lives.
- It's not by chance that James became the first martyr. It was James with his brother and mother who came to Jesus asking for thrones, but Jesus made it clear that there could be no glory apart from suffering, "asking are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized? Their bold reply was "we are able" (Matthew 20:20-23). Of course they didn't know what they were saying, but they eventually discovered the high cost of winning a throne of glory. James is arrested and killed and John imprisoned, boiled, and exiled to the isle of Patmos. So they did indeed drink of the cup, and share in the baptism of suffering that their Lord had experienced. Verse 4 – if it pleased the Jews that James was killed just think how delighted they'd be if Peter also died, so Herod placed him in prison guarded by four squadrons of soldiers.

V5-12

- While Peter is in prison the church is praying. Interestingly we don't see mentioned that prayer was offered up for James but we see prayer mentioned so prominently with Peter. Maybe the church thought the Apostles were untouchable until James actually was killed. Verse 6 – Peter is asleep, now we've read before where Peter was asleep but it was in the corrective Garden of Gethsemane of transfiguration. But here, he trusts the Lord – the only Christian sleeping that night, trusting the Lord (**Proverbs 3:24**). Verse 6-10 – Now imagine waking up to a miracle and having an Angel for your alarm clock. Years later Peter probably had this miraculous experience in mind when he wrote **1 Peter 3:12** – for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. Verse

12 – once he realized that this wasn't just a dream, but real, he goes to the house of Mary mother of John whose surname is John Mark.

V13-17

- The church is having an all night prayer meeting and the very thing they're praying about interrupts it. Rhoda rose to answer the door, hears Peter and then goes and tells them our prayers are answered! Verse 15 – Their response to hearing the news is almost comical. Remember they have prayed earnestly, night and day, specifically for Peter to be delivered, yet all they can say upon hearing the good news that Peter is free and their prayers were answered is “oh Rose, you blooming idiot, its not him but his angel”. Jewish tradition taught they had a guardian angel and when a person dies his angel can take your form and voice. When we pray do we expect God to answer? Also do we expect God to give us our requests? (**Philippians 4:6-7**). Verse 16 – after tiptoeing to the door and seeing for themselves that it is true and that Peter was free he gives them instructions.

V18-25

- Upon learning of Peter's escape the soldiers were just as surprised as the Church; and after being interrogated by Herod he ruthlessly puts them to death. Verse 20-23 – God knows how to deal with our enemies. As Herod thought he would enjoy a celebration honoring him but it turned out being his farewell address. Verse 21 – he's in his finest robes decked out for all to see. Someone yells out he is not a man but a god. Be careful of the praise you receive – because Herod, upon eating up this flattery, is now being eaten up by worms. History tells us it took him **five** painfully excruciating days before he died. So instead of Peter being killed by Herod who thought he was a god, it was Herod who was killed by Peter's God. Verse 24 – but the word of God continued to grow and spread to both lands and hearts alike.