



## The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

# ACTS 12:1-19

"THE DELIVERANCE"

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

## AT A GLANCE

*When faced with political opposition, the new church turns to prayer. What are we tempted to do to control the situation? How is God calling us to a different response?*

## CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the Church. In previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the Church) have become where heaven and earth meet. The Church is multiplying rapidly, and with it, opposition from the outside and obstacles from within. Despite the opposition, these followers of Christ are sown, not scattered, into areas and people groups in need of hearing the Gospel.

However, the expansion of the Church is at another turning point. It is gaining more and more opposition from political authorities as the transformational power of the Gospel is turning the world upside down. And just like Jesus suffered and died on our behalf, the Church is beginning to understand they have the same privilege. This is a scary and true test of where these believers find their sense of safety and power.

## SERMON SUMMARY

Pastor Joey preached this week about two very different approaches to political vulnerability demonstrated in Acts 12. These approaches show us the contrast of how the world and the church approach vulnerability and power. Pastor Joey admonished us to pay close attention to this text as we grapple with our relationship with power as Christians, first, and as citizens in our country, second, endowed with certain political power.

Looking at the account of James' execution and Peters's imprisonment in Acts 12, we see two players seeking power to deal with their political vulnerability. They are:

**Herod:** He demonstrates man's power, which uses worldly power and manipulation to remain safe and get what we want out of life.

**Early Church:** This demonstrates God's Power, displayed through believers surrendering to His will and yet seeking Him through earnest prayer.



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Pastor Joey explained the first response is foolishness and the second response is peaceful wisdom. Because the early Church knew that things are never so bad, God can't work, AND they are never so good we do not need him to. He also gave us a timely reminder as we enter an election season, that no amount of political adversity can compare to God's power, and no amount of political favor can compare to His generosity. And if that is true, then as Christians, our first action when we feel politically vulnerable is to seek the Lord in prayer.

## DISCUSSION

### Read Acts 12:1-19

What jumps out to you?

Herod's position as a Roman political official was, by nature, a politically vulnerable one. Otherwise, he wouldn't have had to pander to the popular opinion. He had to constantly posture and manipulate to stay safe and get what he wanted out of life.

Conversely, the Church also felt politically vulnerable and unsafe. Their friends and leaders were being killed and imprisoned. They desired this to change and feel safe, so they FIRST sought God in prayer.

Left to our own devices, we will always resort to a Herod-like posture toward our vulnerability. That is because God created us to feel safe with him, but now we seek it by our strength in a fallen world. To change this learned response, we must understand our motives so we can disengage from the world's view of power and seek God's power through prayer. When we make this change, we will slowly and surely begin to experience more and more peace that comes through prayer.

### So Let's Explore...

- As we have seen, Herod felt vulnerable and used his power to make him feel safe and in control. How have you observed that same perspective toward political vulnerability in the world around you?
- How have you been tempted to do the same?
- The Church felt vulnerable and first chose to use its limited power to seek God's Power. Why do you think that was?



*This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.*

*Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.*



# ACTS 11:19-30

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## Let's compare with our own experience:

- What does it feel like to be vulnerable/unsafe, and how does that impact your behavior?
- What factors in life currently make you feel vulnerable or unsafe?
- In the short term, what would the outcome be if you took a "Herod Approach" to your vulnerability?
- In the short term, what would the outcome be if you took an "Early Church Approach" to your vulnerability?
- In the long term, what would the outcome be if you took a "Herod Approach" to your vulnerability?
- In the long term, what would the outcome be if you took an "Early Church Approach" to your vulnerability?
- How do the answers to those questions impact your perspective on your vulnerability?
- What would you like to do differently this week to practice taking an "Early Church" approach to the vulnerability you experience in your life?

## Prayer

Tonight let's practice this "Early Church" approach by praying to God about our vulnerabilities and surrendering them to his will. If you are comfortable let's go around the room and pray about something we are facing that makes us feel unsafe.

## Prepare for Next Week

Read Acts 12:20-25. And as you read, notice yet another approach to political vulnerability—the way of Tyre and Sidon, pandering to political power to the point of blasphemy!



**PREPARE FOR  
NEXT WEEK:**

Read Acts 12:20-25