

ACTS 12:18-24 6/15/25
Pride Goeth Before a Fall

We recall that in last week's sermon from Acts 12:1-17, we saw King Herod, the man appointed over Judea by the Roman Emperor Claudius, attempting to win the favor of the Jewish leaders by joining with them to persecute those known as "Christians."

Herod had some members of the church arrested so that he could "**Mistreat**" them.

These things ought not to surprise us when they happen. It was so for Jesus, it was so for the first century church, and it has been so for every generation of the church from **THAT** day until **TODAY**.

And it **WILL CONTINUE** to be so until the day last day. Until the day when at last our Redeemer and King comes in the fullness of His glory and power to judge the wicked.

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."

Among those arrested was the Apostle James – brother to the Apostle John. Herod had him executed without so much as an even cursory trial.

When he saw how much this pleased the Jewish leaders – he had the Apostle Peter arrested, intending to execute him as well.

Bad timing however – as Peter was arrested during the ceremonies associated with the Passover.

Therefore, Herod had him placed in prison until after the Passover and then invited the Jewish leaders to attend the execution the following day.

Herod had Peter bound with **TWO** sets of chains and placed **FOUR** guards on him. Two were in the cell with Peter, and two more were stationed outside the door.

But God said the Christ would come as a deliverer to set the captive free

- **First and foremost**, this meant to set those who would trust in Him free from their captivity to sin, its power over mankind and its condemnation in God's righteous judgement.
- **BUT**, there were and are times where the power found in the name of Jesus *LITERALLY* frees those in captivity free from their captors!
- There are times, when in Jesus' name the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, those with cancer are healed, and believers facing all manner of situations beyond their control are restored – THROUGH THE POWER OF FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS AND **PRAYER!!**

As we read last week – James was arrested and executed for his relationship and testimony regarding Jesus. – Such was the will of God – Therefore we do not question it.

Peter then was arrested – and the church prayed – and the will of God was to miraculously free him. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in that cell, the chains fell off, and they walked out of the prison together.

Scripture does not record for how the guards were made to be unaware of these things – But that next morning, there was no shortage of confusion...

ACTS 12:18-19

18 Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.

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.

You almost have to feel sorry for the guards in scripture –

- Guards at the tomb – oops
- Guards at the public prison for Peter and John – oops
- Guards at the prison for Peter – oops
- Guards at the prison for Paul and Silas – well, he probably got fired, but at least he got saved!

Under Roman law, it was customary for a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape to receive the punishment the accused would have received.

Besides this, King Herod had been publicly embarrassed by this matter.

Also, remember from **ACTS 11:27-30**, prophets had foretold a famine was coming, and so the church in Antioch had taken up a collection with plans to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to be a blessing to the church there.

SO, not only was Herod trying to impress the Jewish leaders and win their favor in executing members and leaders of the Christian church,

... **but he was also** trying to distract everyone from the fact that the **FAMINE** was growing increasingly serious.

All of these things likely had Herod in a foul mood, so he travelled from Jerusalem to his palace in Caesarea on the coast.

ACTS 12:20

²⁰ Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre (tīre) and Sidon (sīduhn) and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country.

Judea had a long-standing trade history with the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon.

In the Book of Ezra 3:6-8 we saw that during the rebuilding of the temple, the Jews traded food, wine, and olive oil for large beams of cedar.

Scripture does not record WHY Herod was angry, but we do see indications of the spreading famine, as representatives come to appeal to Herod for peace –

And in their efforts, the delegates win the favor of a man named Blastus, who was in essence the chief of staff of Herod's household.

Blastus then helps the delegates in getting an audience with the king.

Here is a fine example of how extra-biblical writings can support the writings of scripture.

Flavius Josephus was a Jew born in 37AD to a prominent family in Jerusalem who built for himself a trusted reputation among the religious leaders at a very young age.

He would later travel back and forth between Rome and Jerusalem and built for himself a trusted relationship with Emperor Vespasian, who granted him Roman citizenship and even granted him an annual pension in service to Rome to produce historical writings regarding the ways, customs, and wars of the Jews.

These writings were completed in the first century. They are certainly **not** the inspired words of God and are time biased in content – BUT they do contain many **insightful observations** from around the time of Christ and the development of the church.

One of those historical accounts is regarding the events we are discussing here in Acts 12.

Josephus writes that Herod had returned to Caesarea at this time to sit over a festival in that city being held in honor of the city's patron – Claudius Caesar.

Herod was said to have put on a splendid display and himself attended wearing a magnificent silver garment.

You can imagine the scene – the wealth of the kingdom was on full display– Choice foods and flowing drinks. (even though a famine was looming) Musicians, dancers, opulence everywhere you looked.

And seated at the front of it all was King Herod Agrippa.

ACTS 12:21-23

²¹ On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

You can almost see and hear it –

Herod going on and on about the glory of Judea – how humbled to be an honorable part of the Roman Empire – and how by HIS HAND – the land would prevail, and the people would prosper.

And the crowds responded with praises and adoration proclaiming, that Herod's words were **the words of a god! Not that of a man!**

Josephus writes - presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery.

Self Pride – a deep feeling of pleasure and satisfaction in one's self for one's own achievements.

What is at the heart of all sin? – **PRIDE**

What is the motivator that causes mankind to deny the existence and authority of God - **PRIDE**

What is it in the condition of mankind that makes him say –

"I do not believe in God."

"I have no need of God."

PRIDE- where mankind convinces himself that HE is master of his destiny.

PRIDE- where mankind declares in his head and his heart that HE is sovereign.

PRIDE- where mankind claims responsibility for all that he achieves and blames all his failures on others.

PRIDE- where the middle letter declares the problem- **"I"** –

And the song from the boastful heart sings the hymn of pride- **"Then sings my heart, oh me to me, how great I art, how great I art"**

But friends, God has much to say about the prideful, arrogant, and insolent heart.

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 26:12

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Psalm 10:4

In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

Jeremiah 9:23

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches,"

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Romans 12:3

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

58x the word pride is declared directly by the word of God and warned against

Isaiah 2:12

For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;

Proverbs 16:5

Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

And so it was for King Herod that very day...

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.

Josephus writes - A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner...And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life,"

Our God is the Living God, the Sovereign God – and His will is always done.

He alone holds absolute authority over all things and is always in control.

He has a plan for those who repent and call on His name in faith.

He also has a plan for those who reject and deny Him.

1 Peter 3:8-16 *(With quotes from Psalm 34)*

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

"FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER,

BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

In our men's theology study this past Saturday, we were discussing The Authority of Scripture.

That is- The word of God IS TRUTH.

- It is the **standard** by which all other things true are tested.

During our study it was discussed how sin **distorts** mankind's view of reality.

Because of sin, mankind looks at the truth of God's word and either doubts it or dismisses it.

In either case – when mankind doubts or dismiss the truth of God’s word, he declares himself greater than God’s word – and therefore greater than God.

This is why Satan first attacked the word of God to challenge Eve and Adam as well regarding what God had said.

Where God said to disobey Him meant death – both of the flesh of man – and his perfect relationship with God.

Satan proclaimed the greatest lie EVER told – *“You will not surely die.”*

The statement is to declare God a liar – and to claim that mankind has the final say over what is true or untrue.

And that entire thought process comes down to PRIDE – where mankind things higher of himself than he ought.

Why did God strike King Herod down?

the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory.

I am going to say something quite shocking – This sermon is going out in the month of June – a month where masses of people proclaim their **pride** in their sexual orientation and preferences.

But friends, their sexual immorality IS NOT the reason people will find themselves judged and condemned by the One, True, Living and Holy God!

Any more than any other of the categories of what God has declared as sinful beliefs or acts is what separates people from the blessings of God.

It is not the acts – These are only the symptoms of the problem.

It is because they have failed to give glory to God!

They have failed to acknowledge the Jesus of scripture as the Christ, the Son of God and eternal member of the Trinity of God.

And ALL of this is because they have failed to believe and submit to the Word of God as the authoritative standard of truth.

<<<< IN CLOSING>>>>

ACTS 12:24

²⁴ **But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.**

Consider that from the beginning of the church – the world has hated the message and sought to silence the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Himself was put to death in a most brutal fashion.

From the earliest days of the spreading of the Word of Truth – People who deny God and cling to the ways of man –

- have sought to avoid, ignore, mistreat, and even murder those who stand and proclaim the name of Jesus in their actions, attitudes and words.

And yet...

At every turn, it seemed the message and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth not only refused to die out – BUT GAINED STRENGTH!

We have to ask the question: WHY?

Why against all odds – against all opposition –

- Did Word of the Lord continue to grow and to be multiplied as multitudes upon multitudes turned from the worship of self and the world –
- To worship of the Living God and dedicated lives to submitting to the teachings of scripture?

WHY? Because...

Men and women, young and old, from every tribe, nation and tongue, were **HEARING** the message of the gospel.

- Because committed followers of Jesus were sharing the gospel.

Men and women, young and old, from every tribe, nation and tongue, were **BELIEVING** the message of the gospel.

- Because committed followers of Jesus were demonstrating their belief in the gospel by their faithful speech, attitude and actions.

And because of these things, men and women, young and old, from every tribe, nation and tongue were **LIVING** out the message.

- Because committed followers of Jesus were living out their faith – day by day – as proof of the faith, the hope, and the Spirit of God that dwelled in them.

Hard question church – We know the growth of the church has not just stagnated but has been in decline for a generation,

WHAT CHANGED?

Could it be that the church of the last generation has declined in its commitment to-

- **SHARING THE GOSPEL**
- **DEMONSTRATING OUR BELIEF in our Speech, Attitude and Actions**
- **LIVING OUT OUR FAITH- In and out of the church – everywhere we go – performing the duties of an Ambassador for Christ Jesus.**

Remember the words of Gamaliel, the wise and trusted member of the Pharisees who had spoken out to the Sanhedrin as they considered what to do with the apostles when they arrested them- and considered having them put to death-

ACTS 5:38-39

So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

His words of wisdom are still true today!

Those who oppose those who are living, proclaiming, and giving all glory to God are not in opposition to us... They are in opposition to GOD!

Friends we have become friends with God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross – IF – We accept that truth in FAITH.

But the foolish seldom choose and many do not have ears to hear to wisdom.

It is the sad truth of the stubborn who **refuse** to hear, **refuse** to see, **refuse** to believe.

And in those cases – because of the nature of mankind –

- The heart chooses will always honor the desires of the flesh over the will to glorify God.

To be willing to please God takes a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart – to give us a new heart –

And the faith to commit to the truth of God's word - and live it out in our lives.

Galatians 5:16-17

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Day by day, **the new heart the Lord gives us – is a heart of praise** – that is able to know and to worship God –

But that new heart is still **bound within the rags of this flesh** which has been cursed by sin.

That new heart is made to **walk in, live in, and witness the worst this world** and worldly people have to offer.

It gets **dragged around in the filth of the world** and soiled with our own weakness and failings –

DO NOT GIVE UP CHURCH – DO NOT GIVE IN

Instead pray the prayer, sing the hymn, that is found nearly word for word from **Psalms 51:10-12**

Grab your bulletin insert and sing with me –

*Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me*

Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me

Cast me not away from Thy presence, oh Lord
And take not Thy holy spirit from me

Restore unto me, the joy of Thy salvation
And renew a right spirit within me.

This was the power of the truth of the attitude of the early church.

Their lives were hard.

There was judgment and persecution around every corner.

But God, in His perfect will –responded in His sovereign power – to make a demonstration of His authority over all authorities.

AND THE CHURCH KEPT GOING AND GROWING!!

May it be so of us to.

May it be Pine Grove Community Church

But if it is to be so – it will and must begin with you. (and me)

DO NOT GIVE UP CHURCH – DO NOT GIVE IN

Your God is greater.

And what has He required of us?

Micah 6:8

*He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to **do justice**, to **love kindness**, And to **walk humbly** with your God?*

Amen – Let us pray