The Book of Acts Series Lesson 25

Acts 12:1-19

“This means unexpected consequences”

Introduction: There are times in life when it seems like things just keep going wrong. During times like these Murphy’s Law comes to mind, “If anything can go wrong, it will.” Though this is not actually a law, not everything that can go wrong always goes wrong, but it is a reminder to be prepared for the unexpected. In chapters 10-11 we were able to see some unexpected changes in the way God works in this world, namely that salvation is open to all who will believe, both Jews and Gentiles. In the midst of this transition the disciples in Jerusalem were forced to flee their homes, were in the midst of a famine, and now the hand of Herod stretched out to afflict the leadership of these believers.

Transition: The circumstances of the early believers led them to dependence.

1. Herod’s persecution was greater than the believer’s might.
2. The apostles had been endowed with supernatural abilities, this would have put fear in the hearts of those who opposed them.
3. Herod followed the footsteps of his grandfather Herod the Great (he ordered the slaughter of infants during the time of Christ’s birth) and his uncle Herod Antipas (he had John the Baptist beheaded).
   1. When the Jews saw that James died by the sword they rejoiced.
   2. Herod used violence during a time of famine, as a means to benefit his political career.
4. When Herod went after Peter he did so with overwhelming force.
   1. There were 16 armed soldiers surrounding him.
   2. One soldier was chained to Peter on either side. He was not going anywhere.
   3. They did not kill him immediately because of Easter.
5. Your immediate situation may not seem as bleak as this, but the situation of the world around us is truly dark.
   1. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and is afflicting the live of billions. To look at some people you would think that they are completely immersed in the ways of this world. It seems that some people are in the clutches of Satan and what’s worse, they don’t seem to mind.
   2. There are doubts, trials, and temptations in the lives of Christians that cause us to feel overwhelmed. Anger, drugs, pornography, worry, and bitterness are just some of the things can creep into the lives of Christians and be a continual vexation.

Transition: Many times in our lives we wish for the easy road, but the difficulties that come our way are what drive us to dependence.

1. Prayer is the means that we have to see the impossible come to pass.
   1. The disciples did not raid the armory, sign petitions, or organize marches. They hasted to the place of prayer and continued there while God did the work. Breaking Peter out from maximum security.
   2. God’s answer to their prayers defied the expectations of many
      1. Herod and the people of the Jews were not expecting it. V.11
      2. The disciples did not expect it V. 14-16
   3. Jesus was a man of prayer Mark 1:35 *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*
   4. Christians are called to be people of prayer 1Thessalonians 5:17 says it very simply “*Pray without ceasing.”* There is nothing too big or small to come to God for.
   5. Prayer is such a powerful tool at the disposal of Christians. God is not just looking to accomplish difficult things, He wants to do the impossible in and through your life.
      1. When was the last time you asked God to do something impossible?
      2. What has God done in your life that would not have been possible for you to accomplish on your own?
         1. Salvation
         2. Health
         3. Guidance through difficulties and danger

This instance of answered prayer led to what God is most interested in.

1. Answered prayers will lead to the growth and multiplication of His Word.
   1. The disciples did not treat prayer like a Christmas list or a grocery list of things they wanted or felt they needed. They prayed with a purpose:
      1. *I John 5:14 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:”*
   2. Through overcoming opposition in our lives we can show the true power of God.
      1. Alcoholics are delivered
      2. Drug addicts stop using drugs
      3. People who used to curse and be angry no longer do those things
      4. Marriages can be restored

Conclusion: In order to see God work we must not just run to prayer in times of crisis, we must be a people of prayer. Through the prayers of God’s people this world was impacted 2000 years ago. They saw something awesome happen. God can still do that today, but His people have to pray. This will not happen by a mere desire and recognition that this is true and important. We are all prone to forget, this is why we set reminders on our phone or write notes on the fridge. I want to encourage you to think of ways to pray for those you know who are busy spreading and learning God’s Word: Pastor Joe Dickinson, missionaries, the staff, Sunday School teachers, etc…

Take the necessary steps to incorporate this in your life.