



What stood out to you most from the sermon? Why?

Key Takeaways:

1. The kingdom of God doesn't need favorable political conditions. The church has survived and thrived under hostile governments throughout history.
2. God's sovereignty means He reigns even when He doesn't rescue. Sometimes God delivers; sometimes He walks His faithful through fire. Both reveal His sovereign presence.
3. God isn't limited by our lack of faith. Peter was rescued while half-asleep, and the church doubted even as their prayers were answered.
4. Honest doubt is better than pretend faith. Bring God what you actually have—He's not grading your faith performance.
5. The gates of hell will not prevail. This isn't just a promise for the future; it's a reality we can trust today.

Discussion Questions:

1. When Everything Looks Dark (Acts 12:1-5) The church appears to be in trouble with James executed and Peter imprisoned. When have you felt like the church or your faith community was under threat? How did that feel?
2. The church's response was to pray fervently (verse 5). What does fervent prayer look like practically? What prevents us from praying this way?
3. James and Peter were equally faithful, yet James was executed while Peter was rescued. How do you wrestle with this reality? What comfort (if any) can we find in God's sovereignty when outcomes differ?
4. God Works While We're Unaware (Acts 12:6-11) Peter was completely unaware he was being rescued—he thought he was dreaming. When have you looked back and realized God was working in your life even though you couldn't see it at the time?
5. Your feelings aren't going to stop God from working. Why is this good news? How does this challenge the way we typically think about faith?

6. Peter wasn't quoting Scripture or mustering bold faith—he was half asleep. What does this teach us about our own spiritual performance and God's grace?
7. Faith Mixed with Doubt (Acts 12:12-17) The church prayed for Peter's release but didn't believe Rhoda when she said he was at the door. They even thought it was his ghost! How does this story challenge our assumptions about strong faith?
8. The father in Mark 9 cries, "I believe; help my unbelief!" How can we be more honest with God about our doubts while still maintaining faith?
9. Why do you think Luke included this embarrassing detail about the church's unbelief? What does it teach us about the Bible's honesty?
10. Part 4: God's Kingdom Prevails (Acts 12:18-24) Herod executed the guards, accepted worship as a god, and was struck down by God. What does this part of the story reveal about earthly power versus God's power?
11. Verse 24 concludes: "But the word of God spread and multiplied." Despite persecution, doubt, and tragedy, the church grew. What does this tell us about worrying over cultural or political threats to the church today?

Practical Applications:

1. Spend time in prayer being brutally honest with God about your doubts, fears, and struggles. Write them down if helpful. Practice saying, "I believe; help my unbelief."
2. Journal about a time when you couldn't see God working, but looking back now, you can see His hand clearly. Let this build your faith for current uncertainties.
3. Identify one situation that feels impossible and commit to praying for it daily this week—even if you struggle to believe anything will change.
4. Reach out to someone who has experienced loss or unanswered prayer. Don't offer easy answers—just be present and remind them God hasn't looked away.
5. Ask yourself what "iron gates" seem impossible to me that might be nothing to God? Am I more focused on political/cultural conditions than on God's sovereignty? Where do I need to stop performing faith and start being honest about my doubts?