

# Sermon Discussion Questions



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

## "GOSPEL ADVANCE THROUGH A PRAYERFUL PEOPLE"

**Big Idea:** Because of grace, Christians are a bigger threat to evil in all our obvious weakness than evil, in all its apparent strength, will ever be to the church.

### Discuss

Thanks to the wonders of modern cinematography, we have probably all witnessed a moment when two armies faced each other on the battlefield. There is almost always a shot taken from a helicopter or drone that sweeps across the entire countryside giving us a vivid display of the strengths and weaknesses of each side. We've seen the number of shields and spears, or guns and cannons, as well as the fierceness or fear on the faces when the camera moves in for a close-up.

In this chapter of Acts, we see two kingdoms at battle: the Kingdom of God and his church, and the kingdom of this world. At first glance, the world's kingdom appears to be winning. Herod has summarily had James "put to death with the sword." (v. 2) Peter is chained up between two soldiers, with two more guards standing sentry. The next day, he's scheduled for trial and probable execution, and the Jews who oppose the Gospel are, in a chilling understatement, "pleased." It does not look like there is much hope for "everything sad to come untrue."<sup>1</sup> But the church, we are told, is earnestly praying.

- 1) We don't know if the church prayed for James, but it seems likely that they did (or at the very least, unlikely that they didn't). There was no last-minute liberation for James, however.
  - What does this story about James (and then Peter) teach us about "no" answers to prayer?
  - What do these stories of both seeming defeat and stunning rescue teach us about God's Kingdom and the advance of the Gospel?
- 2) This remarkably detailed story about Peter and the praying church gives us much food for thought.
  - Would you say that Peter and the church appear weak or strong in this story? Explain your answer.
  - What is the value of united prayer? Should we be concerned about praying together with others or having a lot of people pray for one thing, and if so, why?
  - Both Peter and James, the brother of Jesus (the James mentioned in v. 17), wrote about suffering and prayer. Take some time to read the following verses from their letters while keeping in mind the story from this chapter in the book of Acts: 1 Pet. 4:12-19, 5:7; James 1:12, 5:13-18.
- 3) Did persecution hinder or aid the spread of the gospel?

<sup>1</sup>Sam Gamgee voiced this hope in Tolkien's *The Return of the King*.

DATE: May 17, 2020

SPEAKER: Joe

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 12:1-19a

### Pray

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." *Acts 12:5*

Heavenly Father,

Would that the second half of this verse could always be true of us! Turn us to prayer and call us to your throne so that over and over again, earnest prayer might be the first response to every situation we face in our community and in this world. Is there persecution? May the church be earnestly praying. Is there a great want of anything? May the church be earnestly praying. Are our brothers and sisters suffering? May the church be earnestly praying. Do we know people who have never heard the Gospel? May the church be earnestly praying.

Forgive us when we fail to pray, and fill us with a deep realization of the privilege of prayer, so that praying is not duty, but delight.

In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.

**PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS**

PCA Administrative Committee

**PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS**

Bill and Melanie serving in a sensitive area