

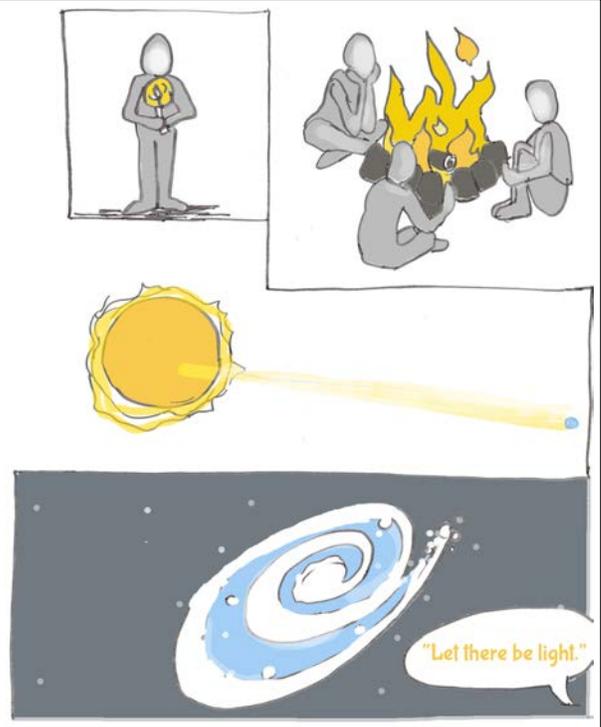
### *The Difficulty Level of Things*

1. "We can do this" **It should work out**
  2. "That will be hard!" **Hard but maybe possible**
  3. "Not a chance!!" **Impossible**
- Think of this range in...
    - Relationships
    - Within my own heart and life
    - Church
  - What seemingly impossible thing do you long to see happen?
  - Pray: to see the mighty power of God in these things

## Greater by Far

### Acts 12:1-19

Chinese: page 1786  
 Spanish: page 1402  
 Brown: page 1104  
 Green: page 752



*Acts 12:1-19*

- 1-2: James (apostle) was executed by King Herod
- 3-4: • James was one of Jesus' apostles:
- 5: a chosen follower of Jesus
- 6-10: and a leader of the church
- 11: • King Herod used the persecution of Christians
- 12-16: to protect his power
- 17:
- 18-19:

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*King Herod's approach to life*

Roman empire: rulers over foreign peoples

**King Herod** Agrippa I: Roman king in Judea

- Built his power by political strategies
- With the emperor: **Rome**
  - Friendship with emperor gave him his rule
- With the locals: **Jewish leaders**
  - Worked hard to win their approval
- He worked hard to suppress minority voices that threatened the peace and displeased Jewish leaders
  - Christians were a “problematic minority”

Rome



King Herod

Jewish  
Leaders

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- 11: to increase his power
- 12-16:
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*Acts 12:1-19*

- 1-2: James (apostle) was executed by King Herod
- 3-4: Peter (head apostle) was arrested with plans to execute
- 5: • Peter was the most visible leader
- 6-10: of Jewish Christianity
- 11: • Arresting and publicly killing Peter would please the
- 12-16: Jewish leaders, and perhaps could kill Christianity
- 17: • For Jewish leaders, do it after the Passover feast
- 18-19: • Peter had miraculously escaped from prison before, so security was as tight as could be
- 16 soldiers (not just civilian guards) for Peter!

They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord **opened the doors of the jail and brought them out.** “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”

*Acts 5:18-20*

***Acts 12:1-19***

1-2: James (apostle) was executed by King Herod

3-4: Peter (head apostle) was arrested with plans to execute

5: Peter was in prison while the church prayed

6-10: • Contrast:

11: • Herod's power

12-16: • Church's weakness, yet depending upon God's power

17: • This was a crisis for the church

18-19: • Grief over James's execution, fear for Peter's life, and fear for the future of the church

• Praying “earnestly” (not “with great faith”)

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6-10: Peter (half asleep) was rescued by an angel

11: • Peter was not expecting it → deep sleep!

12-16: • “Behold!”: Entirely by the angel’s power and

17: initiative (clearly not an escape attempt)

18-19: • High security: 4 guards for 1 person, changing every 3 hours, so there was no possibility of escape

• This was God’s work. Peter was just keeping up!

• Peter didn’t even believe it when it was happening

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11: Peter finally realized he was actually free!

12-16: • Only after it was over did he see it

17: • God’s hand rescued Peter from Herod’s hand

18-19: • This was God’s plan and God’s action, not Peter’s

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12-16: The church slowly came to believe it too

17: • They prayed without expecting Peter's release

18-19: • Yet God worked anyway!

- Amazed at deliverance of Peter

- Like resurrection: first witnesses were women, and the men didn't believe them ("You're crazy!")

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11: Peter finally realized he was actually free! **GOD is**

12-16: The church slowly came to believe it too **the only hero!**

17: Peter explained God's work, and departed

18-19: • Tell this story to others! (perhaps the frightened...)

- God's power is far greater, even though James died

- James (brother of Jesus) was becoming the leader of the church in Jerusalem

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17: Peter explained God's work, and departed

18-19: Herod killed the guards, and departed

- Herod had to "save face"
- Emphatic: these guards didn't help Peter escape
  - Tragic that they died because Peter was rescued

**The Big Idea**

God's power

is greater by far

than all powers that would resist Him

**human natural supernatural**

and than the faith and expectations of His people

**whether small or great**

**Now to him who is able to do**  
**immeasurably more**  
**than all we ask or imagine,**  
**according to his power**  
**that is at work within us,**  
**to him be glory**  
**in the church**  
**and in Christ Jesus**  
**throughout all generations,**  
**for ever and ever!**



**Amen.**

*Ephesians 3:20–21*

### *Application*

#### **Have faith in God**

- God is able to do immeasurably more!
- God can make a way when there is no way.
- Have faith in God rather than...
  - worry or regret (worrying backwards)
  - pride or self-hatred
  - technique (even prayer) or people (even wise people)
  - trying to have enough faith
  - despair or inaction

The God who declared the universe into existence,  
 and raised His Son from the dead,  
 can turn any trouble into hope and goodness

*Application***Have faith in God****Express our faith in...**

- Prayer
  - The power of prayer is the Almighty God
    - **not** our faith or technique or perseverance or skill or ...
  - Prayer is a key way to enact our conviction that God's action is what we need **and grow**
  - Sometimes I stop praying when I can't see any good options
    - I think: "No wisdom is needed because there is no choice to make and there is nothing anyone can do"
  - God can make a way where there is no way!
    - **So pray!**

*Application***Have faith in God****Express our faith in...**

- Prayer
- Obedience
  - Peter was told to stand BEFORE the chains fell off
  - Sometimes God's actions happen AS we obey, not before
  - Often God acts THROUGH our simple obedience

*Application***Have faith in God****Express our faith in...**

- Prayer
- Obedience
- High expectations, submitted to God
  - God is able, and He tells us to ask boldly and with faith
  - Yet Peter was recued,  
while James the apostle was beheaded
  - So pray:  
“You are able! So I ask. And I will humbly accept your will.”

*Application***Have faith in God****Express our faith in...**

- Prayer
- Obedience
- High expectations (submitted to God)
- Seeing God's hand
  - We tend not to see what we think can't be
  - We can miss the opportunity to praise God and grow in faith
  - We can miss the opportunity to know God and His ways
  - We can miss the opportunity to join His work

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