

Acts 12:18-13:3

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[0 : 00] Open up God's Word to Acts. Acts chapter 12. Picking up on our study. So, as a lot of you are aware, I'm going to be married in a couple of weeks.

But in all seriousness, I'm feeling like the weight that a lot of you have experienced who are married.

And just preparing yourself, not just for the event, but for actual marriage. And preparing yourself spiritually above all.

Feeling just the weight of this is a big deal and I have to come to God to work on me and to prepare me as best as I can be. And I reached out to a friend of mine recently, Zach Watson, who lives in Dawsonville now.

But a guy who invested into me a lot of my early Christian life. God's really given this guy just a talent and a gift to understand the Word and to teach the Word.

[1 : 13] Just a man who loves Jesus. And one of his, when he went to seminary, he exempted his first Greek course by translating the book of James. Yeah, he's that kind of guy. I hate people like that.

I feel like I, but, but I reached out to him just to say, hey. And he just encouraged me like, man, as you're preparing to get married, like let that elevate your thoughts towards the heavenly marriage and the return of Christ.

And as you will be purifying yourself for our heavenly bridegroom one day. For the marriage supper of the Lamb. And allow that to like even be the driving force behind, like while you're preparing now. And just really, really challenged me. And to think about Christ returning and the end coming, there's some things that do have to happen first.

And one of those is that the gospel should be preached to all nations and then the end will come. And with that in mind, I just want you to be aware that the end will not come easily.

[2 : 21] That there are many people, many leaders, many nations who hate Christ, who hate the gospel. And many obstacles that we as the church are going to have to wade through with our own blood, with our own sweat.

That many will die to bring the gospel to the nations. And with that in mind, I want us just to keep that in our minds as we're reading today and as we're looking at Acts.

And just to throw some other stuff out there, like while you're listening, like look for yourself in the story. Like that's a tip for listening to God's word.

Not just kind of waiting for the preacher to give you the application and you can kind of check out until then. The application is going to come from text.

And you need to be able to pay attention and ask God and His Spirit to open your eyes. And as if God was addressing you personally from His word, because He is.

[3 : 29] And every time that you hear the word, you're accountable for what you hear. So if you're just here to gain knowledge, then you need to ask God to change your heart, because we're held to the standard of which we've attained in God's word.

So let's just read our text and then we'll dive into it. It would be really awesome for me to turn there myself so I can do that. All right.

All right. Our text today is just going to be Acts 12. We're going to start in verse 18 and go down through chapter 13 into verse 3. Chapters and verses are not inspired by God.

Just the text is. So we are going to just continue reading down a little bit. But starting in verse 18, it said, Now when the day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.

And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries in order that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there.

[4 : 39] Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. And they came to him with one accord. And having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace because their country depended on the king's country for food.

And on an appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, the voice of a God and not a man. And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory. And he was eaten by worms, and he breathed his last.

But the word of God increased and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark. Now there was in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manon, a lifelong friend of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul.

[5 : 49] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Let's join me in a word of prayer. Father, I just ask that during this time, your people would worship through the hearing of your word, that you would have the desired effect on them, and that it would carry them from this place to obedience, to sacrifice, and to laying down our lives for others for the sake of Christ.

And I pray that you would help me to communicate with clarity and to not fear man, but to only fear you. God, we just offer at this time, I pray it would be pleasing to you.

In Christ's name, amen. So last week, Daniel preached in the, starting in the earlier part of chapter 12, and this was basically the acts of Herod Agrippa.

There are several Herods in the New Testament. This one is more or less the third main Herod, Herod Agrippa. And so he kind of went on a rampage, and he sought to stop the advancement of the gospel in his territory.

[7 : 23] Herod Agrippa was in some hot water with the Roman authorities. He owed a lot of debt, and he had just some chaos going on in his realm that he had been given charge of.

And basically, he had to get his stuff together, or he was going to feel the wrath of Caesar. And in some ways, he thought that the new sect of Christianity was causing a lot of this problem and causing threat to the stability of the region.

So, with that in mind, I just want you to, again, as we look through this, just think about how it just feels like the whole world is against us as believers.

Here in the West, we've enjoyed a season of peace where there hasn't been that much hostility as you might find in some other parts of the world.

But I feel, just as many of you might, just if you've been looking at our nation now, and even just the crazy political situation, that, I mean, things are, you should just know, like the Bible says, things are not going to go our way.

[8 : 35] They're not. Our hope is not in America or in our government. Though we pray for them, and at any moment, God could, if He wants to, bring revival.

But we also just know that it's just not going to go our way. We know that it's going to get harder. We know that it's going to be increased secularization and increased hostility to the truth.

And when that happens, we've got to have enough fiber in our faith and trust in our Lord to press through that regardless of like what comes.

And I feel like many of us are just going to blow over when this happens because we've become so used to comfort and ease in the West and our Christianity really isn't what's exhibited in the Word of God a lot of the time.

So we have to prepare ourselves and I want this text to be a means of that, a means of encouragement to you. And we're just going to do it with just asking two questions just about the text and then applying that.

[9 : 43] So again, listen for yourself throughout this, but what are, the first one, number one, what are Herod's evil desires? What are Herod's evil desires?

Like what are his intentions in this, in these chapters here? Because they are pretty evident. And you can see, you can see this, but I want you to jump back just briefly to the beginning of chapter 12

and look at verses 1 through 5.

Just the beginning of chapter 12. This is what Daniel preached on last week. It says, about that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church.

He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of unleavened bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Alright, so in this, you can see very clearly Herod's evil desires.

[11:01] One, just sort of very plain, was that Herod desired to contain or even eliminate the expansion of the gospel. He didn't want it going any further.

He said, this has got to stop. So he had never been a fan of Jesus, never been a fan of believers. And it says that he laid violent hands on them. It means like to render an evil effect, to inflict evil harm on someone.

This was his desire. This will be the desire of anyone that is hostile towards the gospel coming to their nations. And then it says that they, he not only did that, but he kind of singled out the leaders of the church.

He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. Kind of implying, like under the law, someone who preached blasphemy was to be beheaded. So more or less, that's what his charge was, but that's how he died.

And then on the other hand, he arrested Peter and threw Peter in prison, more or less kind of saying that I'm going to keep you for something special. You're going to be the prized bird in my cage.

[12:09] I'm going to bring out for a special occasion to humiliate you and then show you who's really the boss. So he kind of held Peter over to the side as a prized captive or a trophy of his power.

And Jesus had said to James earlier in the gospel of Mark, this cup that I drink, you also will drink. This idea that very soon, like you will be charged for the same crimes which I'm being charged for, and you're going to die.

And Jesus had told them, remember the word that I've said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will persecute you.

If it's happening to our Lord, then it's going to happen to us. If we really are following him. And Herod would be the first, in a way, of many kings, emperors, presidents, chancellors, who would seek to halt the stop of the gospel by trying to kill the followers of Christ.

It's going to happen. It's going to happen. So, but even underneath this, underneath this, this desire to eliminate or contain the church, look at our text.

[13:31] Very scary. Verse 3 says, when he saw that it pleased the Jews. So, underneath all of this was a very sinister desire, and that was he wanted the praise of men.

He wanted, really, which is fueled by pride, right? He wanted the approval, the praise of men. It says, when he saw that it pleased the Jews. So, the ultimate source of all these atrocious acts is Herod's pride underneath it all.

So, I want you to follow me here. We're going to kind of single out some things, but let's just simply, for the sake of just understanding, let's just define pride as an excessive desire for others to see us as impressive or admirable.

An excessive desire for others to see us as impressive or admirable. And so, he wanted the applause of his subjects, and he also wanted the approval of Rome to, you know, that he's bringing stability to his region.

And this was his desire very clearly in our text. And he sought desperately the praise of men. That's why he kept Peter on the sideline because later on he wanted to bring him out to show in front of all the people that he was the man.

[14:56] So, don't get this wrong. Like, here his actions are an overflow of the evil heart that he had, not the other way around. Alright, that's what our Lord said, like, out of the hearts of men come all kinds of evil.

And he even names, like, pride among those things. So, we're not really defined by that. What's in here is what comes out. It's just how it is.

That's our nature. It's an overflow of our heart. And notice that, unlike Saul, who earlier in Acts was persecuting the church for religious zeal, he was doing it for just his own pride and vanity.

So, even unlike Saul who had become Paul. If you look over to verse 20 in our text, you see that he has some of the people that are dependent on him coming and groveling before him, begging, you know, to get back in his good graces from Tyre and Sidon because they were dependent on his food supply.

And just, you know, come and beg, come and grovel. Let me show you who's really in control. Let me show you that you're going to die if I don't feed you. And so, that's what they're doing.

[16:07] They sent these delegates or whoever to come to Herod and to plead with him to like not cut off their food supply. these are like little coastal cities in Syria.

And so, he'll do whatever it takes to feed that ego. He'll do it through killing believers. He'll do it through giving speeches. And he'll do it through, you know, showing that I'm the one who feeds you.

This is the hand who feeds you. So, he has a desire for power. But then we go on and we see in verses 21 and 22, that he just, you know, bit off the whole thing and began to like array himself and pump.

And it's, whatever it takes, he's going to do it. And he delivered a speech or an oration. So, back in this time, just in ancient times in general, in Greco-Roman society, like, people who came to give who were great orators, they would, it was a source of entertainment.

Like if, you know, you could invite somebody up here and they could, use very smooth speech and persuade you and control you, you would get applause for that.

[17:20] And so, whether he was good at it, who knows, but that's what he did. And he delivered this speech and we see very clearly in our text that all the people just cried out, you know, bravo, like you are amazing, you are the man.

And then they said, the voice of a god and not a man. Right? Very scary words. And so, I want you to contrast, contrast, earlier in Acts when Peter encounters Cornelius and he, like, Cornelius falls to the ground to worship Peter and Peter says, get up, stand up, I'm a man just like you, I'm not a god. In contrast, later on with Paul when people try to identify him as the god of Hermes and he again pushes that off and says, I'm a man, like, get away from me. Do not call me anything supernatural. So, the difference is Herod is like craving this, loves it. Yes, call me a god. Right? And, people who crave the praise of man, Christ is always going to be a thorn in their side because, he said, how can you believe you who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Like, how can you just receive the praise of man and not, like, that's why you won't come to me because you love the praise of others and you reject the praise of man.

[18:56] If you have real faith in Christ, your desire will be to exalt him, to take attention off of yourself and put it on him. A long time ago, maybe in the 70s, doesn't matter, but, if you go down to my study, you'll see a picture of a guy that has like a nice, like, fro and a beard and, his name was Keith Green.

He was one of my, definitely one of my heroes. We sang one of his songs a while back, There Is a Redeemer, I think the name, and, but he was a man just radically changed by Christ back in the, the hippie movement, the Jesus freak movement, and, he immediately just like turned into like the, one of the most like on fire evangelists I've ever, ever seen.

But he was a musician. He played the piano and he was a songwriter and he was the, one of the first Christian musicians to kind of come out and say, I don't want to charge people for my music because if, I don't want to like, I don't want money to be a barrier to ministry and to the gospel.

And, I go on and on about him, but anyways, my uncle, Scott, he actually heard Keith Green play like back in the day and I was like, really? So he told me a story, he said, yeah, like, Keith came out on the stage and people were just like going crazy, like applauding him, and like shouting his name and he just like sat down at the piano, his head low and like everyone's out here just cheering and Scott said that when everyone finished, he like grabbed a little microphone and pulled it down and he says, God despises the praise of man.

Like, let your, the Christian music that you listen to kind of be judged by that. It's just turning to a circus in a lot of ways, but like, don't crave the praise of man at all.

[21:02] He would like go ballistic on people. That wasn't the only occasion who, who like gave him great, you know, praise and stuff. But, so very clearly in our text, we see that two evil desires

that are kind of pushing Herod to do these things that he has coming from his evil heart.

He wants to contain or eliminate the gospel and the spreading of it and he really just wants to fuel his own pride, his own vanity and he wants to seek the praise of men above the, above praising God himself.

So, kind of like the height of this, the height of this, he, uh, raised himself in God-like pomp, puts on his royal robes and he thinks that he is the man.

Like, this is, this is it, right? And you see that God has his own plans for Herod and his schemes.

So, listen, lives that are driven by pride and by vanity and by the approval of others is in opposition to God.

Okay? It just is. So, Herod is talking some serious trash to his Creator. So, what does God do?

[22 : 22] What is God's response? This goes to our second question. How does God thwart Herod's evil desires?

Or how does he dismantle? Or how does he, uh, you know, um, tear apart Herod's evil desires?

And we see this, um, first, and we're going to, like, correspond to all these little things that I just mentioned.

But if you, I just want you to stop and just think about this before we do it. Um, I want to encourage you that in this, this day when, like, everything seems to be going horribly wrong in the church, um, not just here, but worldwide, when, when so much is, at least here in the West, you see people sacrificing the truth for the praise of man to gather crowds to be cool.

And over, and abroad, you see, like, death and persecution. So much is, is happening. But I just want to encourage you that God still reigns.

I want to assure you that God is not subject to man's sinful desires and man's sinful schemes. He is not.

[23 : 40] He holds the life breath of every living thing in His hand. He is not threatened by any of this. So Herod proudly sought all this stuff by plotting and by cunning to have this place of honor, right?

And it's, it's scary because if you're really careful, you can see this sort of stuff in our own lives, right? But, what I want to encourage you with is that wicked men do not thwart God's plan.

He thwarts their plan. It says in Psalm 146 that He thwarts the way of the wicked. They fall into their own traps.

Job wrote, He frustrates the devices of the crafty so that their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their own craftiness and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.

Be encouraged by that. And if Herod had just read the scripture that he had at his disposal, he could have read the words of Solomon, and he could have seen this, the Lord tears down the house of the proud.

[24 : 59] Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall. why is God opposed to people who are proud? There's a lot of ways to answer that, but if I had just one stat that I would say because we have nothing to be proud about, we have nothing in and of ourselves to which we can brag or boast about.

any good that is in me or in you or anyone else has only come by the grace of God. And so how can you boast about something that you were given by somebody else?

It's a, for sinful, broken, corrupt man to say that like, I am worthy of praise when he received everything he did from God himself, it's, it's blasphemous.

Only God, because God is perfect, God is pure, God is holy, only he is worthy of that kind of praise, so it's not wrong for him to ask for it. A long time ago, Jonathan Edwards said, it is right for us to give glory to someone in proportion to that person's excellence.

True? God has infinite excellence though, so he is worthy of infinite glory. And only then, right, only then can we actually be made right with God, if we lay our pride aside.

[26 : 21] We have nothing to be proud about at all. The wicked, the pride, the vanity of Herod puts him on a collision course with God.

Alright? Puts him on a collision course with God. So, as we talk about this, I want you to just see three things that God does just to dismantle or thwart Herod's plans.

So, first, if you remember, he was persecuting the church and he arrested Peter. I want you to look at verse 18 or 19.

it says, And when the day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.

And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries in order that they should be put to death. And then he went down to Judea and Caesarea and spent time there.

Peter. So, what's happened is, like God, with no problem at all, releases Peter from prison.

[27 : 30] That's what Daniel preached on last night. Go back and listen to that or go back and read this chapter. But God just miraculously just set Peter free. The angel of the Lord came and set him free.

They like slipped past the guards. They went out the door and into the city. And Herod was so angry that he just like ordered all the guards to be put to death.

Word can't get out of this, so you have to die. Again, defeat his own ego and pride. So, I want you to hear this too, though, just a little connection.

Why didn't God do that for James? Why did James die and not Peter? I don't have the answer to that. But I can tell you that by this act, James dying does not mean that God couldn't deliver him and chose not to.

Some people bear witness to the gospel through death and others bear witness to the gospel through life. And so, God dismantled this and took away his prized prisoner from right under his nose.

[28 : 42] It's awesome. So, to God, like Herod's schemes are laughable. Psalm 1 says that he who sits in the heavens laughs at the schemes of men. So, the score so far is God won, Herod's zero.

Look down to verse 21 and 23. We see that he, at the apex of all this, he kind of raised himself with all the prompt and gives the speech.

It's the moment he's worked for, and just when all eyes are on him, just when all eyes are on him, that's when God shows to reveal to Herod that he is not, there is only one God, and he is not it.

Ends his life. So, the score is now game over, God wins. So, the other way is that he thwarts this plan is he just kills Herod, takes his life, takes his life.

His angel, the Lord, struck him down. I like the old language, the Lord smote him, I like that, the smote. So, amazingly enough, I'll spare you, but just so you know, the ancient Jewish historian in the first century A.D., Josephus Flevius, he wrote an account of this, and it's pretty much what Luke says.

[29 : 59] Luke gives you the short version, Josephus elaborates a little bit, and makes it very dramatic. It says that right after Herod made this speech, that he saw like an owl fly in, and he just like saw it, and like to a lot of cultures, owls are bad omens, and the people were praising him, saying he's a god, and he just falls and he dies with something going on in his stomach, you know, the worms, eaten by worms, very dramatic, and so, we see at this point that God has said to Herod, enough, like I've allowed you to live and blaspheme my name, enough, and some of these people standing by would have clearly seen that their praise was wrong, right?

So, why death, right? Why is death, what is the theology behind death, okay? There is a theology behind death. Death was a part of the judgment of God on people who have rebelled against him, who have sinned against him, who said, you are not worthy, so we're going to live the way that we want to, and all of us have done that.

All of us have done that. So, I want you to hear this, though. This is Don Carson. He said, the modern mood is to live as if death was not waiting for us in the end.

We just kind of go on about like it's not going to happen, hoping it won't happen, but then he says, but why death? And listen to this, death is God's limit on creatures whose sin is they want to be gods.

Death is God's limit on creatures whose sin is they want to be gods. So, it's God's ultimate way of saying like, do you think you're like me? Well, let me show you how you're not.

[31 : 54] You're going to die because I am the only immortal, invisible God who was and is to come. Death shows us that. And he says, the soul who sins will die.

And because of sin, we all will die. Because of Christ, though, we can have life and life eternal in him, but we still will face a judgment because of sin.

So, the moral of the story is, if you stand against God and his purposes, you're going to go down. There's no way to stop what he has planned. That is the moral of this story.

If we oppose God, you will lose. And not just lose a little bit, lose massively. for eternity. So, he frees Peter. He kills Herod.

And then, what's the third thing that God does? He spreads the gospel. Look at verse 24. The very thing that Herod was hoping wouldn't happen, he's like, just get out of my way.

[32 : 53] This is going to happen. But the word of God increased and multiplied. So, again, God made the fame and glory of Christ spread, not the fame and glory of Herod spread.

So, salvation is going to come to the nations. And like Jesus said, it's going to start here in Judea, and it's going to spread out. It's just going to go out. And to all the nations are reached.

And the whole number of the church is brought in. It's going to happen. So, don't stand in God's way. Get behind Him. And if this is God's purpose, you have nothing to lose.

Like, throw yourself into that recklessly even. Who cares what it costs you? This is God's purpose. And we go on and see this, in this, just without getting in it too much, we see the church that had started in Antioch, and we see that, you know, who is Paul and Barnabas and some others kind of all coming together there.

But a really interesting one that stands out is that, you see, verses this, it's verse one, you see Manan, a lifelong friend of Herod, the Tetrarch.

[34 : 08] So this guy who was a leader of the church of Antioch grew up with the same Herod who killed John the Baptist, the same Herod who stood at the trial of Jesus, the same guy he grew up with, and now he is a leader of the church in Antioch, so just go figure.

And so they began to commission and send out Paul and Barnabas to go on what we might call Paul's first missionary journey, and he begins taking the gospel out to the Gentiles.

Most of us are Gentiles, this is where it started, just kind of going out. So God exploded the cause of Christ because of this little incident, right, that was nothing for him to overcome at all.

So, in conclusion, I want us just to think about a couple of things. One is, very clearly, if you've been listening to the text, that we need to beware of pride in our own lives.

Don't be too swept to Judge Herod. Pride is not a small matter to God at all. I'll just go back to the definition.

[35 : 27] Pride is an excessive desire for people to see us as admirable or impressionable. So, I want you to also know that insecurity that we all have is like connected to pride.

Pride is this hope that they will see us as great and admirable. Insecurity is that instead of them seeing that, they see that we're not perfect, that they see our imperfections, that they see our flaws, that we can't live up to who God is.

And we all have that problem. I don't care who you are. Some deal with it more than others, but we all have it. So, what is that one thing that you're afraid of that you want people to see you as?

You want the praise of men. You crave the praise of man. What area is that in your life? It's linked to pride. C.S. Lewis said, pride is a spiritual cancer.

It eats the very possibility of love or contentment or even common sense away. Pride is a serious thing. So, what area do you really want others to recognize you for?

[36 : 42] What do you seek to portray? Is it like brains, knowledge, and how smart you are? is it wealth, accumulation, and luxury?

You want people to see how well off you are and all the stuff you have? Is it for physical attraction? Is it I want people to see me as cute or sexy or attractive?

This is what I'm going to invest my life into and I hope that they don't really see that I'm not that way. What is it for you? Is it athletic skill?

Is it I want people to praise me for my performance on a field? All those things, guys, like hear what James said, James 4, 6, God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Pride robs us from joy and contentment as believers because it takes our gaze off of the one who gives us that joy and contentment and puts it on us.

[37 : 43] We can't really produce any of that in and of ourselves. We can't. It says that God regards the lowly, the broken, those who recognize that they are nothing apart from him, that they need him.

They rightly acknowledge their spiritual condition before him. And it is those who come to Christ and say, I am far from perfect. I am a sinful, broken person and I need you to be my deliverer.

I want to give you my life. Jesus said, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So, where is that in your life? Attack it. Attack it with God's word, attack it with prayer, attack it with other believers around you. Like, pray that you be like John the Baptist where he said, I must decrease, but he must increase.

that when they see you, they see Jesus and not who you're trying to make yourself into. So, that is one, and just beware of pride in our own lives.

[38 : 49] It's there. So, where do you struggle? It's not okay to God. It's not okay to justify some of these things. And I also should tell you that your pride is probably one of the number one things in the way of you carrying the gospel forward.

You don't want people to see you as losers. You're uncool, unpopular. You want to be accepted. You want to be cool. So, pride even can stand the way of advancing the gospel.

So, again, deal with it. You know, it's there. We need God to help us attack it unashamedly. Being ashamed of the gospel.

So, what I want to last let us encourage you with, I've got my papers out of order. No big deal, they're numbered. So, and the other one is, in the twilight of where believers seem to be kind of losing favor on a national level, even, we need to remember again, like, take solace in that God, this is nothing to God.

Like, he is still in control. It's not who's in Washington or who's in some other parts of the world. he is still in sovereign control. It's the story of humanity.

[40 : 09] Those who exalt themselves against God will be brought low. Listen to this. This is Job 42, verse 2. Job said this, I know that you can do all things and no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

So, throw yourself into that and take comfort into that. because all those who stand in the way of God, according to His sovereignty and the dictates of His will, they're destined to be brought down. It's going to happen. So, be bold. Be courageous with the gospel and go. The people who think that they are so strong before God now, people who curse Him and mock Him, one day when they face Him, I heard Paul Washer say this, and he gave me goosebumps.

He said, they'll be like a little wax figurine before the sun. They'll melt away. Their pride, their courage won't stand before God. Take comfort in that.

A long time ago, I should say just a few years ago, Matt Chandler, a brother in Christ, preacher of the word, he was in the city of Rome meeting with some other pastors from 27 different countries.

[41 : 26] And as they were meeting there, it just dawned on Him, that they were meeting like in the shadows of these ruins of the Coliseum where they used to feed our brothers and sisters to animals and kill us.

And now, like that's just ruins. It's as if God just said, it's no big deal, nothing's going to stop my purpose, and the gospel is going to go forward regardless. So if we are with Christ, we are going to not be defeated.

Stand with Christ. Take solace in the fact that He rules over all things. And with that, I want you to just see God's sovereignty as fuel for going and taking the gospel forward and allowing no obstacle to stay on your way.

Nothing. We're pretty pathetic sometimes. If you think about the stuff that we are afraid of happening to us on the college campus or entering the workplace with our families, I received Voice of the Martyrs magazine.

I encourage you to. It's a great ministry, very God exalting. But this is an addition I got recently and this just made me tear up a couple of times at least.

[42 : 49] And I think, and one reason is because it's so dear to us, because I'm pretty sure that a lot of us who know Jay and Carolyn Whetstone, who have invested their lives much in Central Asia and the Middle East, spent many years in Afghanistan preaching the gospel of Christ, and it dawned on me that I think this was a family that they knew.

And when Jay came back one time, we met back in the corner and we prayed for all the stuff that had happened. But this is about a family that came from South Africa and the Garnowalds. It's Warner, his wife, Haneli, and their two kids, Jean-Pierre and Rhoda. And he was a Dutch Reform pastor in South Africa and just really felt like, man, God's cause has got to go to the nations no matter what.

And they weighed the cost. They said that we could die going, our kids could die, and they decided to go to Afghanistan. They took their kids with them. And not long before these other things happen,

Warner, the dad, he spoke at a conference, and he spoke on counting the costs for Christ. And the last thing he said was, we only die one time. It might as well be for Christ. Make your life count, in other words. And so, in November 2014, in Kabul, Afghanistan, Haneli, the mom, was out kind of running some errands.

[44 : 40] their two teenagers were back at the facility in Kabul, where they lived, kind of taking a day off from school. And their dad, Warner, was teaching a class in that facility.

And around three o'clock, there was three Taliban guys who went over the wall and into the compound and started shooting up the place.

And I'm pretty sure this is what Jay was talking about when he was here. And that God just preserved them in the midst of that. But they were told before they go, you could die.

It says, our friends and our family tried to keep us away from going to a crazy place like Afghanistan and to stay like in the comforts of South Africa.

And it was just clear that the Lord wanted them to be there. So when these guys came into the building, they began shooting up things and Haneli, the mom, was on her way home. She heard the shots and saw the smoke and all the hysteria going on in the streets and she kind of sat out outside just in tears and she kept reading over and over Psalm 91.

[45 : 58] And later on, one of the teenagers who escaped the facility heard one of the terrorists say, they're all dead. We got them all. They're all dead.

And so later on, they found the bodies of her two kids in the top of the apartment who had been killed, both who had great walks with Jesus, both who were excited about taking the gospel further and further to the nations.

They both were killed and her husband was killed. Trying to get others out of the facility, he himself was shot. And this is something that she said later after all this happened.

She says, I don't think that we will know 100% what was the impact of what we made in Afghanistan through the years. I think that we will know one day when we are in front of the Lord, but I believe with all my heart that we made an impact on people's lives.

I believe also that my family's blood that was shed like the seed for the Afghan church, that there will be 10,000 fold harvest in the end because I believe God has the last move.

[47 : 24] And she said, for me on the field, it was a life of sacrifice and difficulty, but in the middle of all of that, the Lord gave us the reward of his presence.

And he himself was with us. Guys, we have to have more confidence in our God. We have to believe in the power of the gospel.

it's so hard for us here. Like we're tempted in so many ways just to lay down, blend in, not cause a fuss, and we're told that by our culture.

But we have to stand for Christ and we have to proclaim the gospel. It's not, it's no different for us here. We need to be faithful.

And so be encouraged by the fact that like according to God's purposes, none of this will be stopped. He's going to do it with or without you. And the gospel will go to all the nations.

[48 : 23] All the nations. So let's just pray together. Let's