

Acts 12:1–24

Overcoming Opposition

1. Opposition 1–5

- a. As the church began to extend to Gentiles, non-Christian Jews increased their opposition to this new movement.
- b. Herod's persecution led to the death of the Apostle James and the arrest and imminent execution of the Apostle Peter.
- c. The church responded in prayer.

As the church grew and began to impact Gentiles, non-Christian Jews increased their opposition and government officials, seeking to gain favour, assisted in persecuting the church leadership.

As the church grows, non-Christians will react with opposition and government officials will join with them in seeking to oppress Christ's church in order to gain favour with "the people."

We must respond by earnestly praying to God.

Questions:

For what reasons might society and government react with opposition and persecution against local churches today?

Where have we seen or experienced opposition?

Take some time to pray for those experiencing opposition today.

2. God Provides 6–11 (Heb 11:33-37)

- a. Rescuing Peter was not humanly possible.
- b. From start to finish, Peter's rescue was a complete act of God.
- c. Peter's rescue was an act of faith.
- d. James' death was an act of faith.

Knowing that Peter's rescue was impossible, the church earnestly prayed. As a result of their faith, God acted to free Peter and rescue him from execution.

Overcoming societal and government opposition is a God sized task that we can experience as we earnestly pray, trusting in faith that God will provide.

Questions:

How does the reality that both James' death and Peter's escape were acts of faith impact how you view God's provision during opposition?

All Peter had to do was follow God's leading. Have you ever experienced God's provision in a way that required you to follow his leading?

3. Tell Others 12-17

Peter persisted in sharing his experience with others, seeking to encourage them regarding God's provision and protection.

When God helps us overcome cultural and government opposition, we are called to tell others to help encourage them regarding God's provision and protection.

Questions:

If you experienced God's provision during a difficulty or time of oppression, take some time this week to tell someone else of that experience.

4. God Avenges 18-24

- a. Peter's guards were executed.
- b. Herod Agrippa began to present himself as a 'god.'
- c. The one true God ended Herod's life.

God brought punishment on those who opposed his church, ensuring the harshest punishment for Herod's blasphemous pride.

We do not need to seek retaliation or vengeance on those who oppose God's church today, as we can trust that God, himself, will avenge.

Questions:

When we face societal and government opposition, what types of revenge or retaliation might we be tempted to take?

How might God choose to enact his vengeance on those who oppose him today?

Overcoming Opposition

When ministry success causes social and governmental opposition, we are called to respond with earnest prayer, trusting and proclaiming God's provision while leaving any vengeance or retaliation in God's hands.