Acts Chapter 11 Verses 19 – 21

* I have seen many make this move over the years (believe and turn) through this ministry and I love that! I think about that often, especially when ministry is tough…why? ***Because you cannot turn to the Lord without the leading of the Holy Spirit.*** I can turn you to philosophy or even to personality…a set of behaviors…but NOTHING makes you be *like the Lord*, **free and alive and loving and kind and powerful and wise**…NOTHING does that but the leading of the Holy Spirit…and I know that…

Acts Chapter 11 Verses 22 – 23a

* Just something *dumb* that I have chewed on this week…GLAD is ***grace, love and devotion***…receive the grace of God, love Him and love others and give God time every day…time in His Word AND time talking with Him…**you WILL experience GLAD.**

Acts Chapter 11 Verses 23 – 30

* I love this scene…Barnabas goes and gets Saul and brings him to Antioch where the church is essentially (*I don’t know* complete/maturing) it’s now freely the Jews AND the gentiles…so they are not just Jews following *“The Way,”* now they are all together as one and they are ***Christians***…and Barnabas encourages them to have **purpose of heart**…you see, ***the heart is the seat of you will.*** Purposing in your heart is entirely different than making a decision with your mind…
* When you purpose in your heart, you are setting the course for your life…you are setting your trajectory…***your way.*** ***You’re making full commitment.*** ***If you don’t make a full commitment to the Lord then you are going to be sucked back into the world***…make that full commitment today…

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 1 – 2

* Now, just so you understand the characters…this is Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great who ruled in the days of Jesus’ birth. And, this is James the disciple of Jesus (one of the ***Sons of Thunder***), not the James who was the half-brother of Jesus.
* We each in our lives stretch out our hands to do something. What is yours stretched out to do? What is mine stretched out to do? I wrote that on a Residence Inn notepad early Monday morning of this past week…*tired, a little lonely*…but **very blessed** by God. I want to, my intention…is to stretch out my hand and ***honor God, love my family, provide for them and uphold them.*** My heart is to be what is spent so that they can reach the Lord and reach freedom of heart and joy of Spirit! So…tired, alone, a little spent…that’s good…I’m good with that…what is yours stretched out to do?
* Eusebius writes that the soldier who guarded James was so affected by his witness that he declared himself a Christian and was executed along side of him. ***Wow***.
* So Herod kills James…first of its kind right here…a ruler killing a Christian with a sword and that *“pleased”* the Jews. The word means, **it arrested them**…got their attention…and so…

Acts Chapter 12 Verse 3

* Man, that’s ***politics*** though…if it *arrests* the people then the politicians will preach it. But set the scene…things were going great for the early church! Saul had been converted, (God did that! – Which is awesome!), the Gospel was everywhere, Cornelius was leading Roman worship, HA, but then this **humongous setback!** Listen, ***there will always be resistance…when strength is growing***…there will ALWAYS be hardship and resistance. You have got to keep going! Keep seeking the Lord! Success is not the most toys or the most comfort…***success is being a foreigner to the thought of quitting!*** Success if finishing well!

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 4 – 5

* Peter was a great threat to evil (plus he had already escaped once) BUT the point I’d like to make is that Peter was ***a great threat to evil*** and so he was assigned a large contingent of guards. So too those that fight for souls today. Would you pray for us? Would you pray for me? It may look easy because I speak *so perfectly* (HA) and have such *admirable fashion sense* (HA), but the truth is…if I give my all, lay my heart out there for this…**I can be hurt a bunch and it is constant.** It’s ok…my prize and home are not on this planet…it’s ok but ***discouragement*** is real-deal man and I know it’s ***100% demonic.*** Remember this please…kindness kills demonic power…

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 5 – 7

* ***Ant Man!*** HA!! That’s totally how I picture this!! *Peter gets shrunk!!* HA! Ok, maybe not…but I love this picture of peace. James was just killed…Peter knows he is next but he’s in such a good sleep that the light shining doesn’t disturb him! *The angel has to punch him!!*

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 8 – 9

* Peter must have been super groggy! I mean the angel has to tell him what to do like a child….HA!

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 10 – 11

* I like this…notice this…***Peter had to wake up twice.*** Awake first he faced a *dulled* understanding…he faced the chains…he faced the first and second contingent of guards…he faced the iron gate….but awake twice, ***he is delivered!*** ***He is certain.*** He has *“come to himself,”* and **he is free!** This is a great picture and parallel of the Christian who has finally come to the end of themselves and can say, *“It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me.”*

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 12 – 16

* The funny thing here (well there are a couple of funny things) but I’m thinking that Peter could probably hear them! There were no cars going by outside…no TVs on inside…he’s probably able to hear **everything!!** *“Peter is here!” “No, you’re crazy!! It’s his angel!!” – Um, guys…it’s me…I’m out here…that’s my stapler…,”* **HA!!**
* It’s also funny that the answer to their prayer is *right in front of them* but ***they don’t have the faith to see it!***  I see that condition in myself all the time!! ***Faith is simply trusting God*** and it’s so simple…where can God’s will, heart, direction and guidance be constantly found…24 hours a day (*Twenty PHO Seven* – joke) – the WORD!!

Acts Chapter 12 Verse 17

* Essentially, the last we see of Peter is right here. There will be a brief appearance of Peter in Chapter 15 but really, that’s it…it’s all about Paul from here on out…

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 18 – 23

* Where did the worms come from? ***From inside of him***…he is eaten alive from the inside out…same will be the life of the godless man…and, interesting tidbit, according to Josephus, this was a 5 day ordeal…

Acts Chapter 12 Verses 24 – 25

* The contrast between Herod and the church rounds out this chapter. History is filled with men who thought they could fight God and succeed. Their ruined lives are evident that God remains…***undefeated.***