

January 24th & 25th, 2026

The Sovereignty of God

Acts 12:1-5

This passage reminds us that God remains loving and in control even when He allows evil to affect His people, and that faith is not measured by outcomes but by trust, prayer, and obedience in every season.

Suffering

Acts 12:1 “About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church.”

❖ Herod was an evil man whom God allowed to rule and persecute the church, all within the boundaries that God set in His sovereign will.

- ♦ Jesus predicted and warned His disciples about persecution and death.

 *Mark 10:35-40*

- ♦ Herod chose to attack the people of God, and God at this time allowed it.

Acts 4:27-28 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.”

Daniel 2:20b-21 “... ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.’ ²¹He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.’”

- ♦ God gives authority to unjust governments that cause suffering for His people.

Romans 13:1 “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

John 19:10-11 “So Pilate said to Him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’ ¹¹Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin.’”

- ♦ God remains in full control of those who have authority and cause suffering in the world.

Proverbs 21:1 “The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will.”

Psalm 33:10-11 “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the plans of His heart to all generations.”

Death

Acts 12:2-3 “He killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.”

❖ Suffering is a normal part of following Christ. God's plan for our lives on earth includes suffering and death.

- ♦ God's sovereignty is the foundation for trust and for praise in the middle of pain.

 **Mark 13:9-13**

- ↳ James' death ended the expectation of special protection for the apostles, revealing the endurance of true faith in God.
- ↳ Persecution is not an accident, but a normal expectation for those who are sent in His name.
- ↳ When we are rooted in God and trust in His sovereignty, we will praise Him.

Job 1:21 "And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

- ♦ God allowed James to be killed and Peter to be arrested to fulfill His purpose.

Ephesians 1:11 "In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."

Romans 8:28-29 "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers."

- ↳ Peter and John were beaten and then delivered from prison, while Stephen was killed after a Spirit-filled sermon.

Acts 5:40-41 "and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."

Acts 7:58-60 "Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

- ↳ Many followers of God received amazing miracles through faith, while many others in the same faith experienced suffering and death.

 **Hebrews 11:29-38**

Prayer

Acts 12:4-6 "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. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison."

- ❖ God calls His people to prayer, not because He is unaware or uncertain, but because He ordains prayer as the means by which His sovereign will unfolds.

- ♦ Prayer aligns us with God's sovereign purpose.

Matthew 6:9-10 "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'"

Philippians 4:6-7 "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- ♦ God's sovereignty doesn't make prayer pointless; it makes it powerful.

1 John 5:14-16 "And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we

know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. ¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.”

James 5:16-17 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.”

- ♦ Our prayer is an act of trust even when the results are uncertain.

Romans 8:26-27 “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

 Deuteronomy 3:23-27

 2 Kings 20:1-6

- ♦ Our response to the sovereignty of God reveals our faith, our trust, and our faithfulness.

Habakkuk 3:17-19a “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹God, the Lord, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer's; He makes me tread on my high places....”

Endnotes:

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