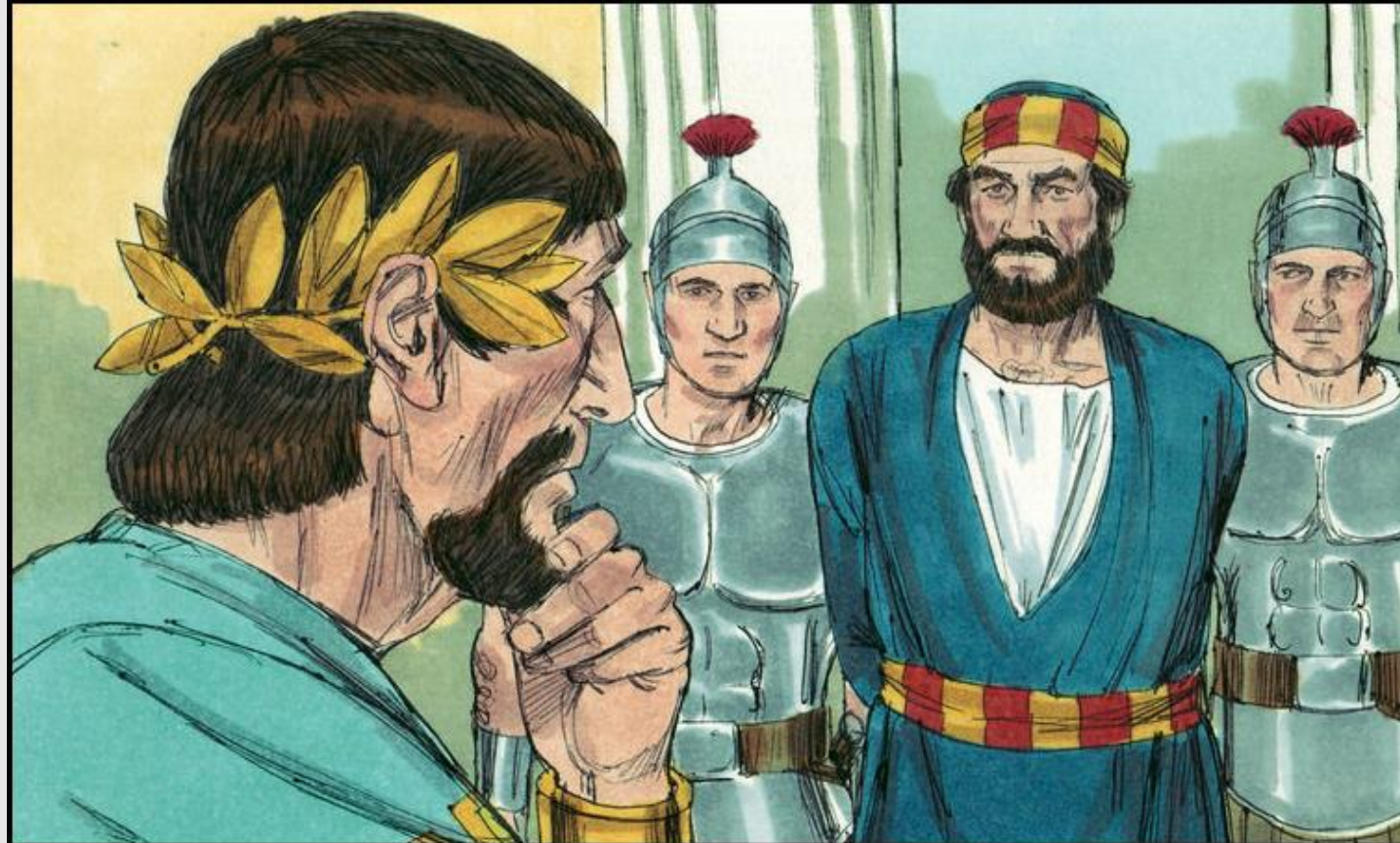




**GOD
DELIVERS
PETER**

ACTS 12:1-17

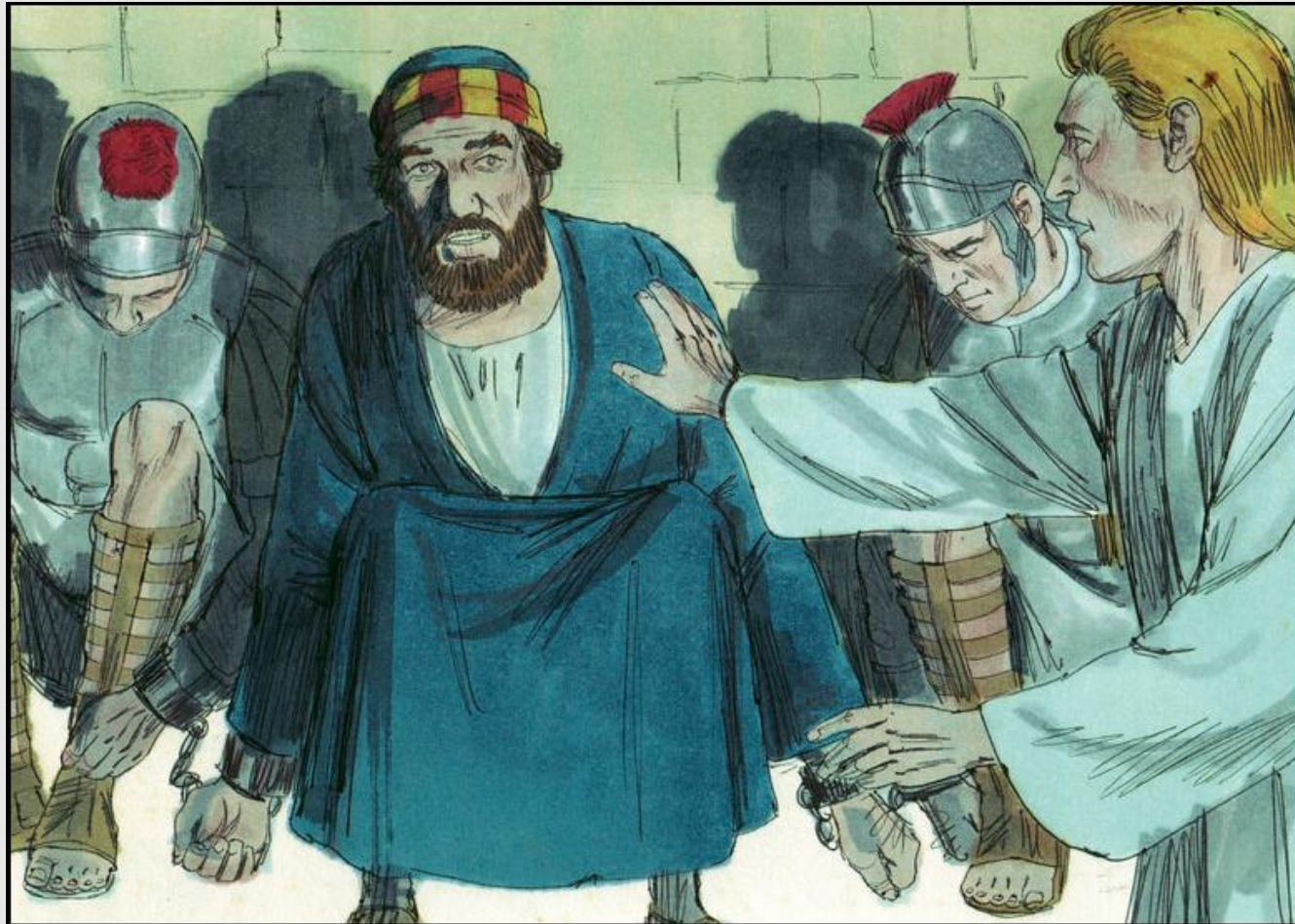
Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. (Acts 12:1-4)



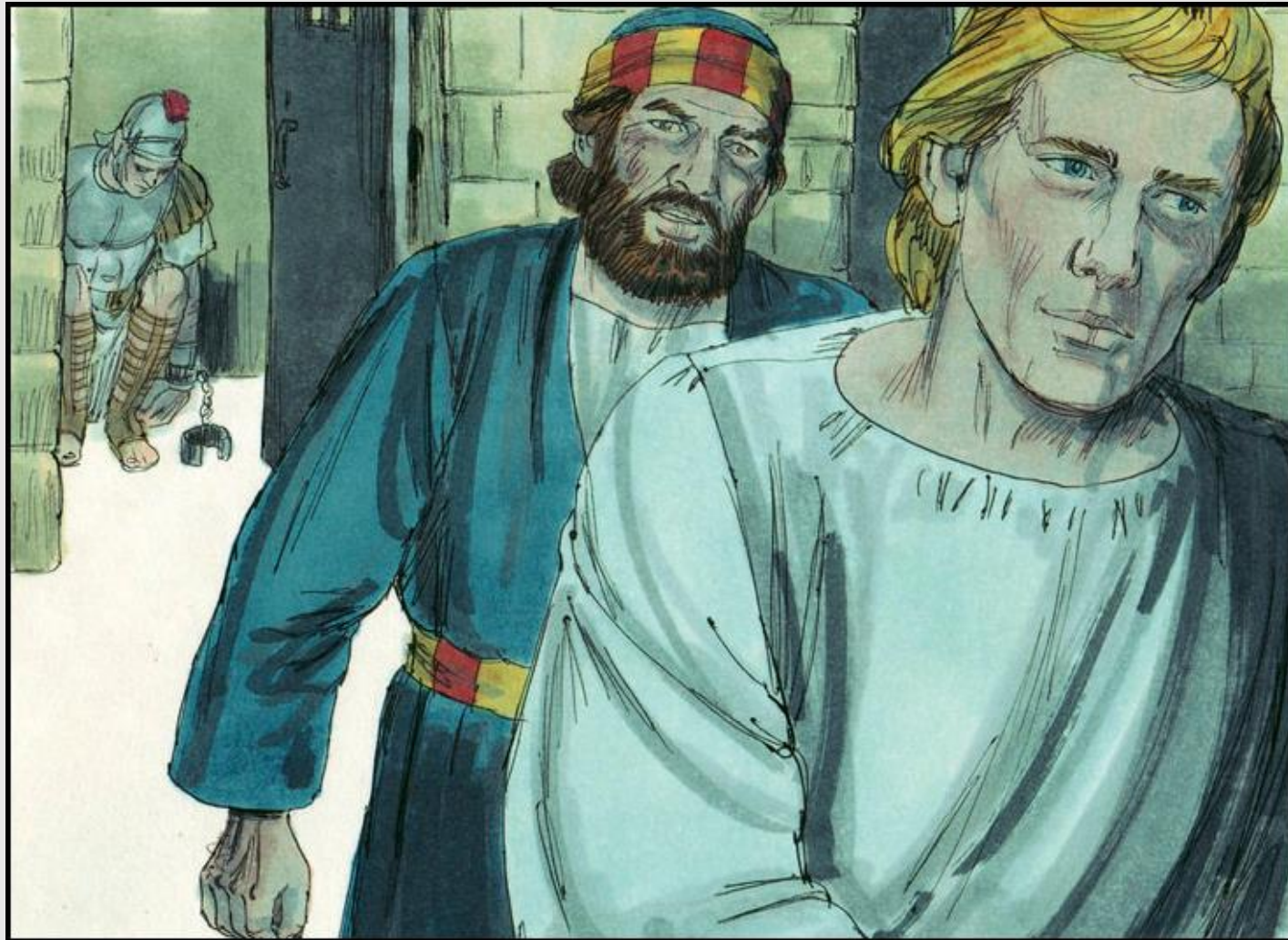
So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (Acts 12:5)



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. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. (Acts 12:6-7)



And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. (Acts 12:8-9)



When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." (Acts 12:10-11)



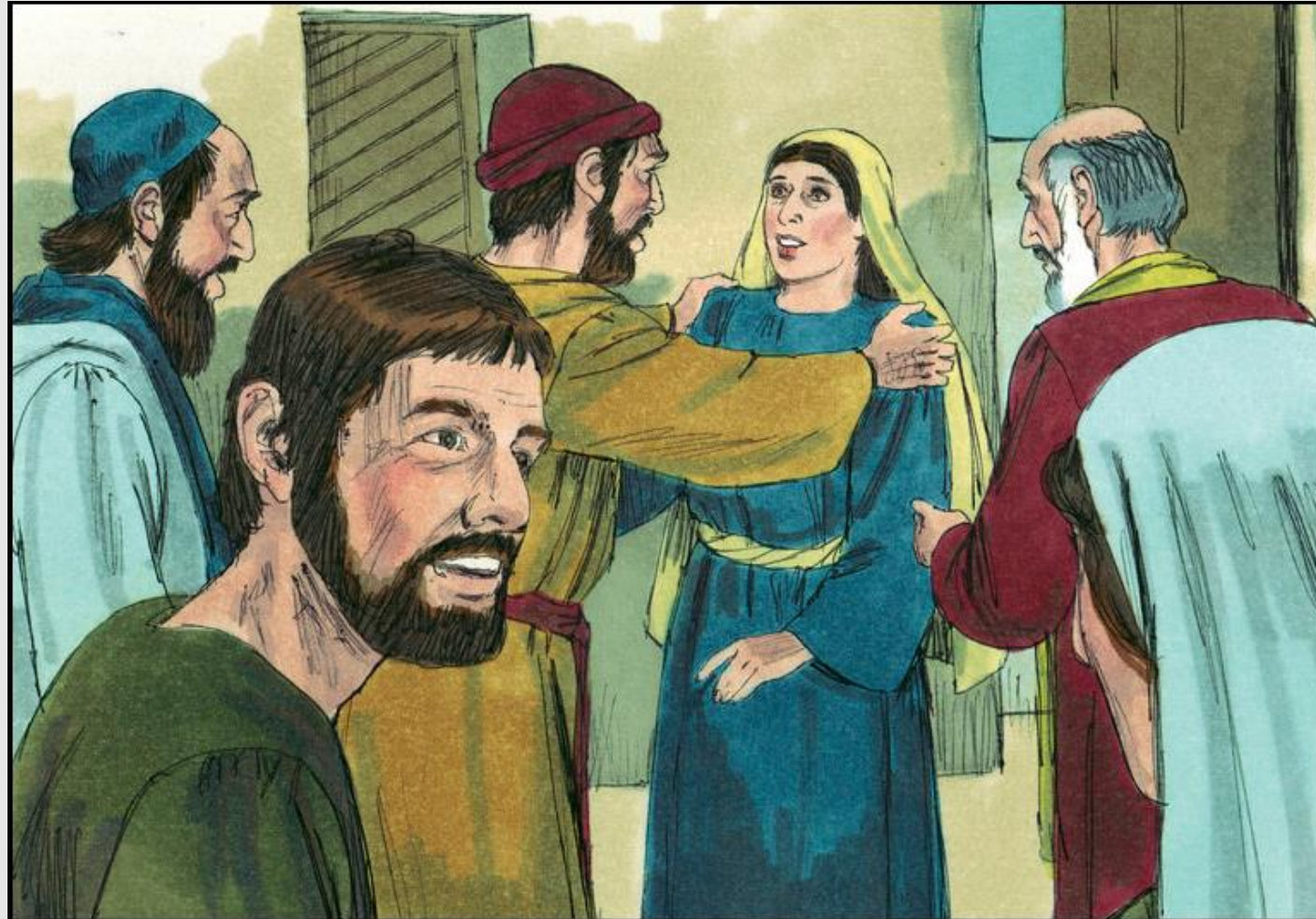
When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. (Acts 12:12-13)



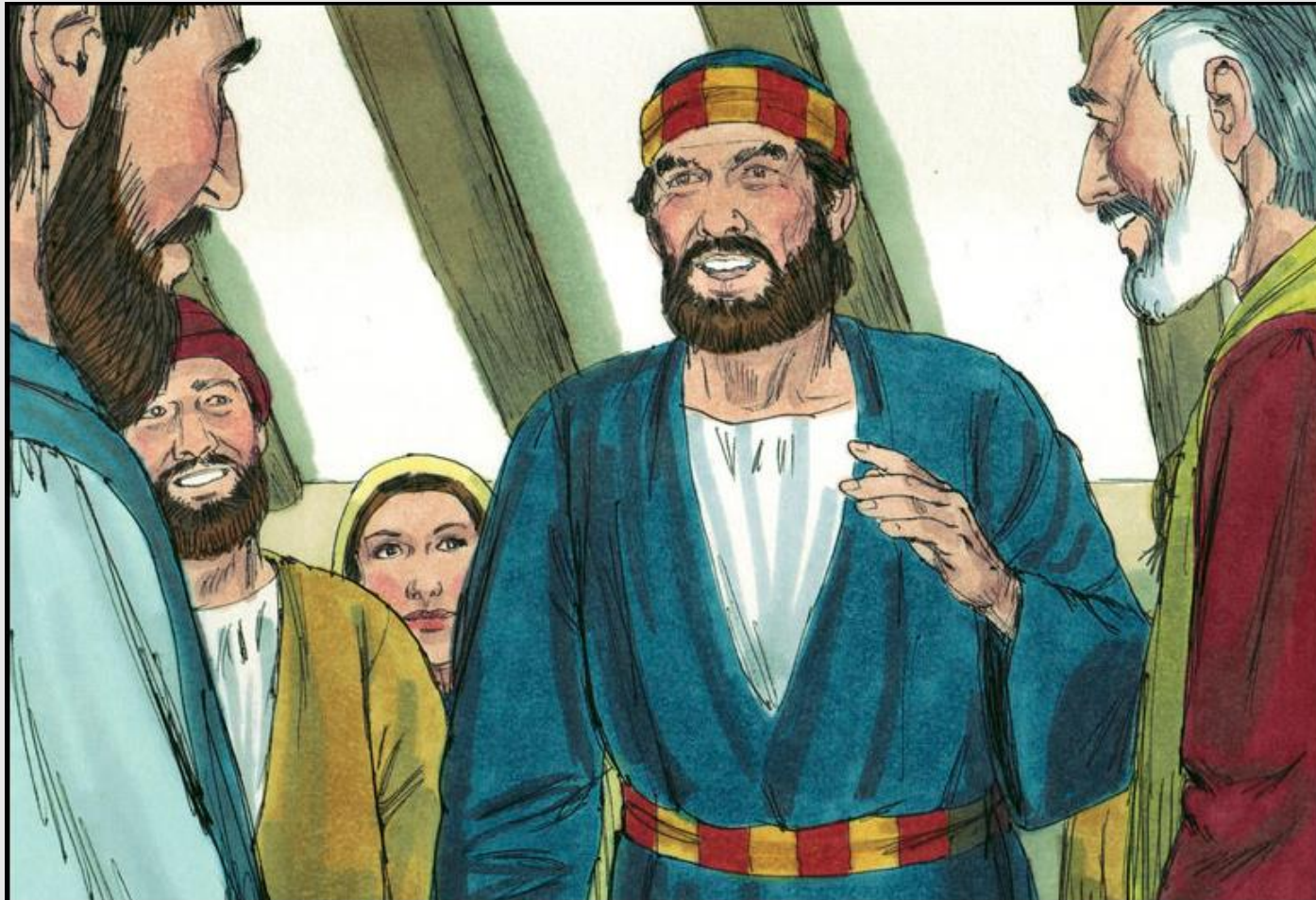
Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. (Acts 12:14)



They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” (Acts 12:15)



But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place. (Acts 12:16-17)



Now when 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 and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. (Acts 12:18-19)



This account is very important for many reasons. But the **six** that we will primarily focus on today are;



Experiencing difficulty is not an indication of God's disapproval.



Peter was arrested in Acts 4 as well as here in Acts 12. But it is clear that these difficulties were not because the Lord was disapproving of Peter or his ministry.



In Acts 2:14, 41 it was Peter's boldness and moving speech that led 3,000 to the Lord and in Acts 3:12 & 4:4 another speech led 2,000 to the Lord.



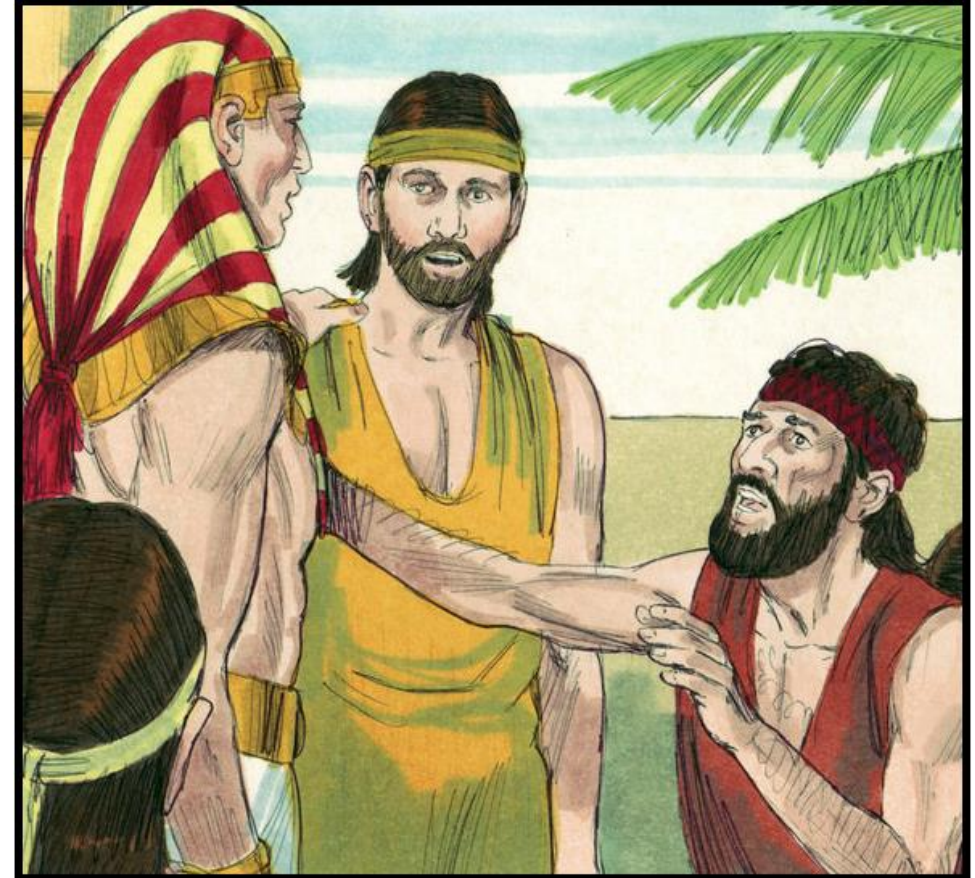
No one else in church history can claim those types of immediate and dramatic results!



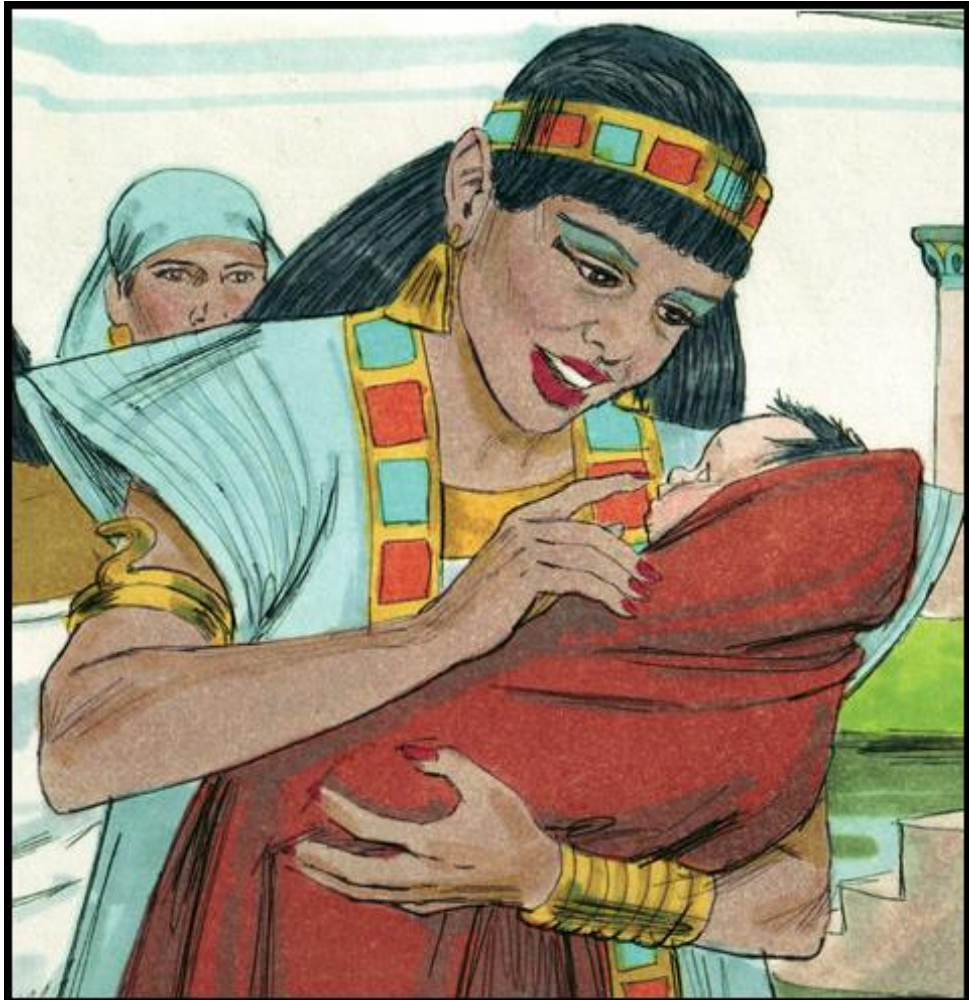
So clearly;
experiencing difficulty is not
necessarily an indication of
God's disapproval of your life
or ministry.

If anything, scripture implies the opposite...
**that great difficulty is usually
the precursor to great impact.**

Consider the life of Joseph.



Consider the life of Moses.



We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

(Romans 5:3-5)

God loves to put believers into situations that are humanly impossible...so that God's power can shine through.



It is very obvious in the way that Luke wrote this account that he wanted to stress the level of security that was placed around Peter.

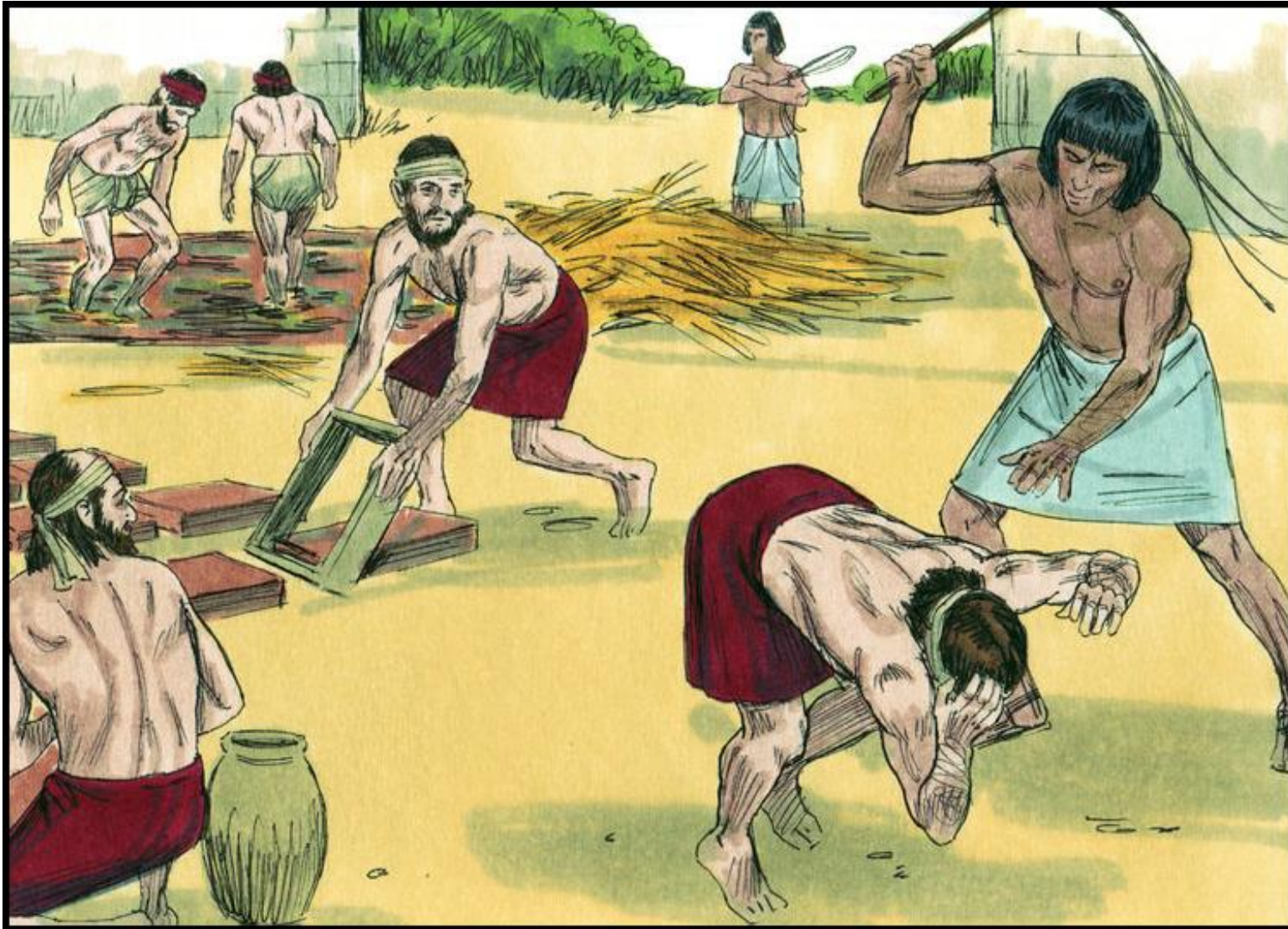
1. He was put in **prison** (v4)
2. Four **squads** of soldiers to guard him (v4)
3. Sleeping between two **soldiers** (v6)
4. Bound with two **chains** (v6)
5. **Sentries** guarding the door (v6)

Peter was clearly in a humanly impossible situation. There was no way that Peter or any other group of people could rescue him.

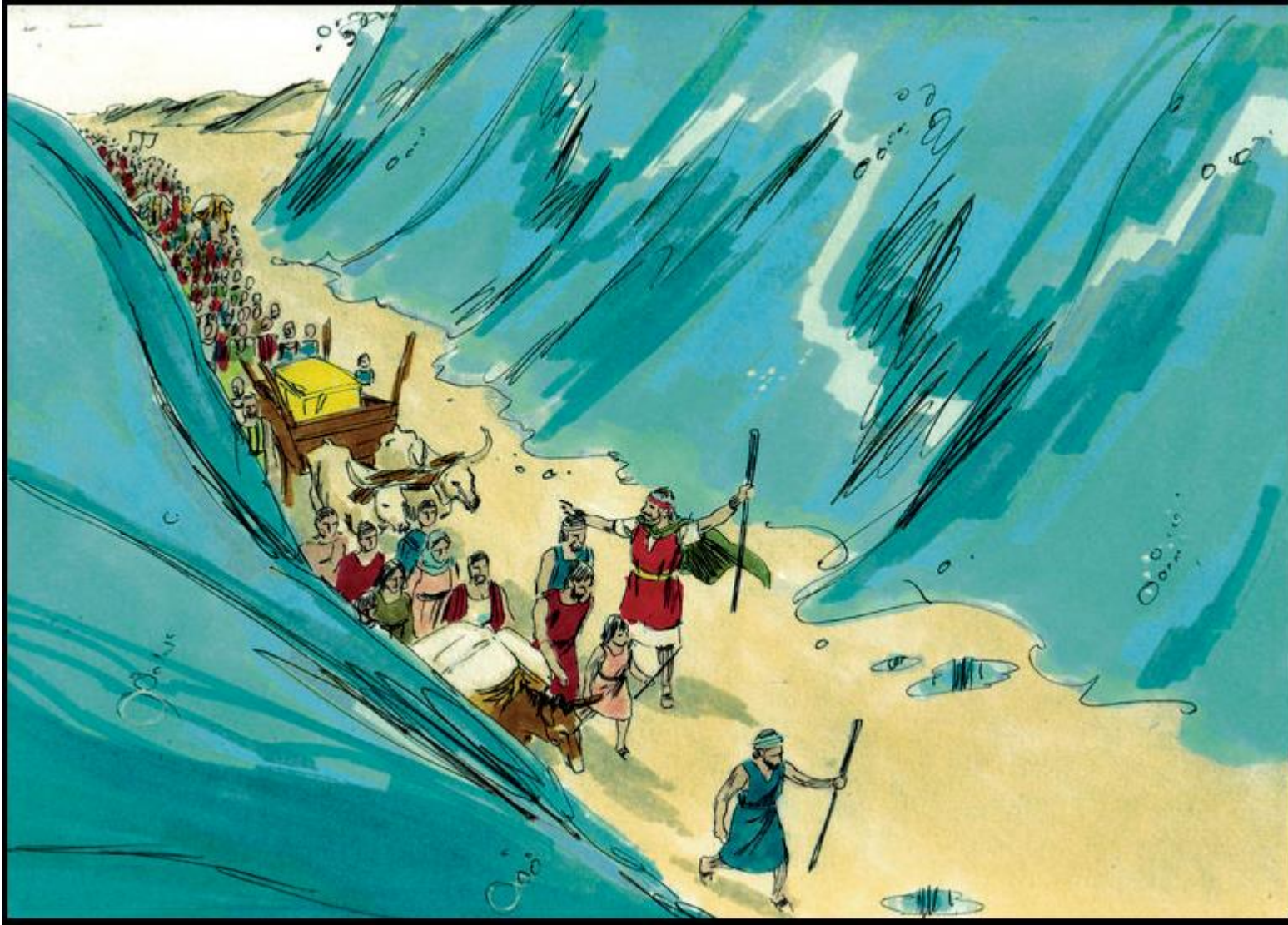


A repetitive theme in scripture is that:
God loves to put people
into situations that are
humanly impossible...
so that God's power can shine
through.

Consider the enslavement.



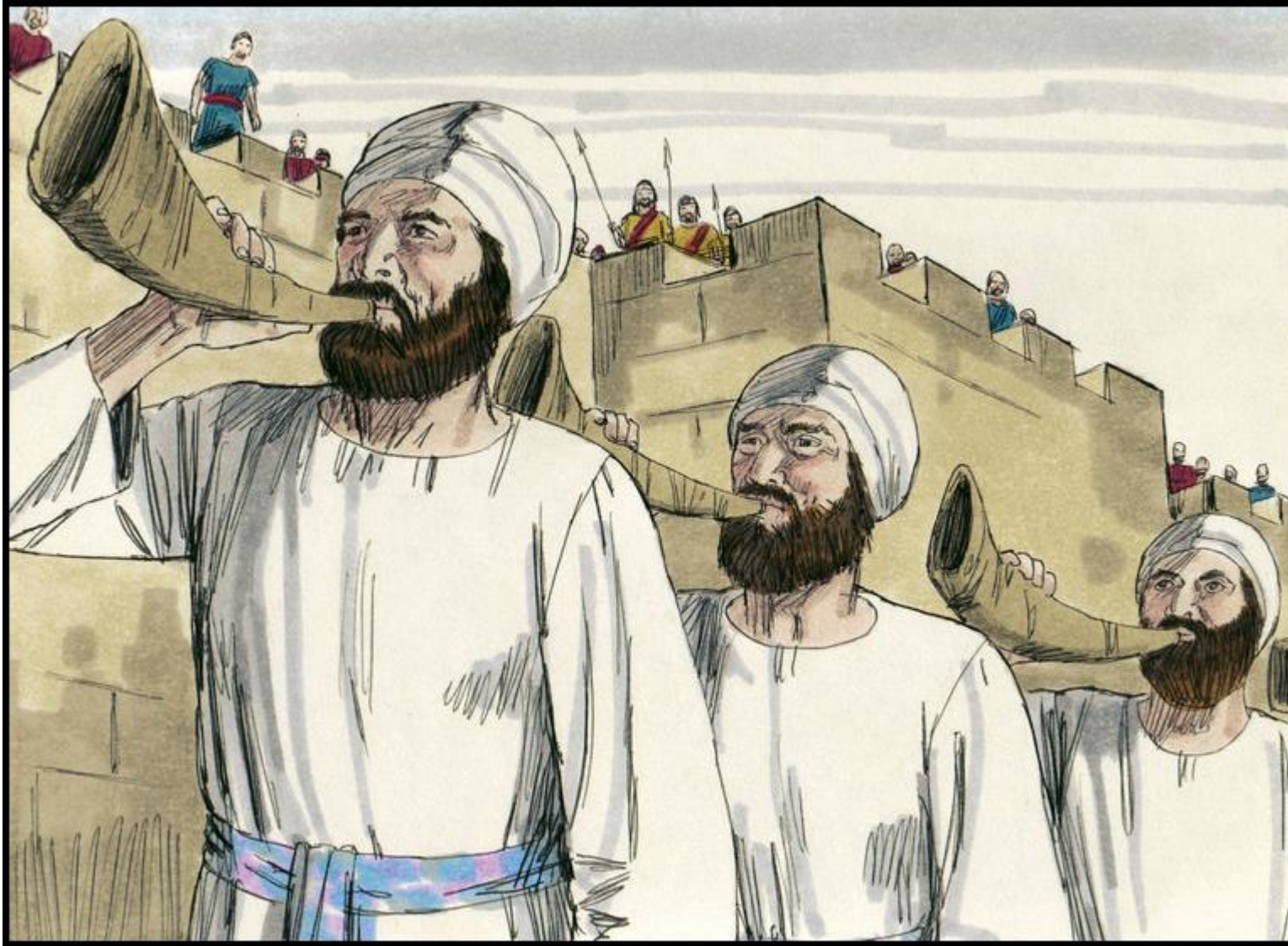
Consider the Red Sea crossing.



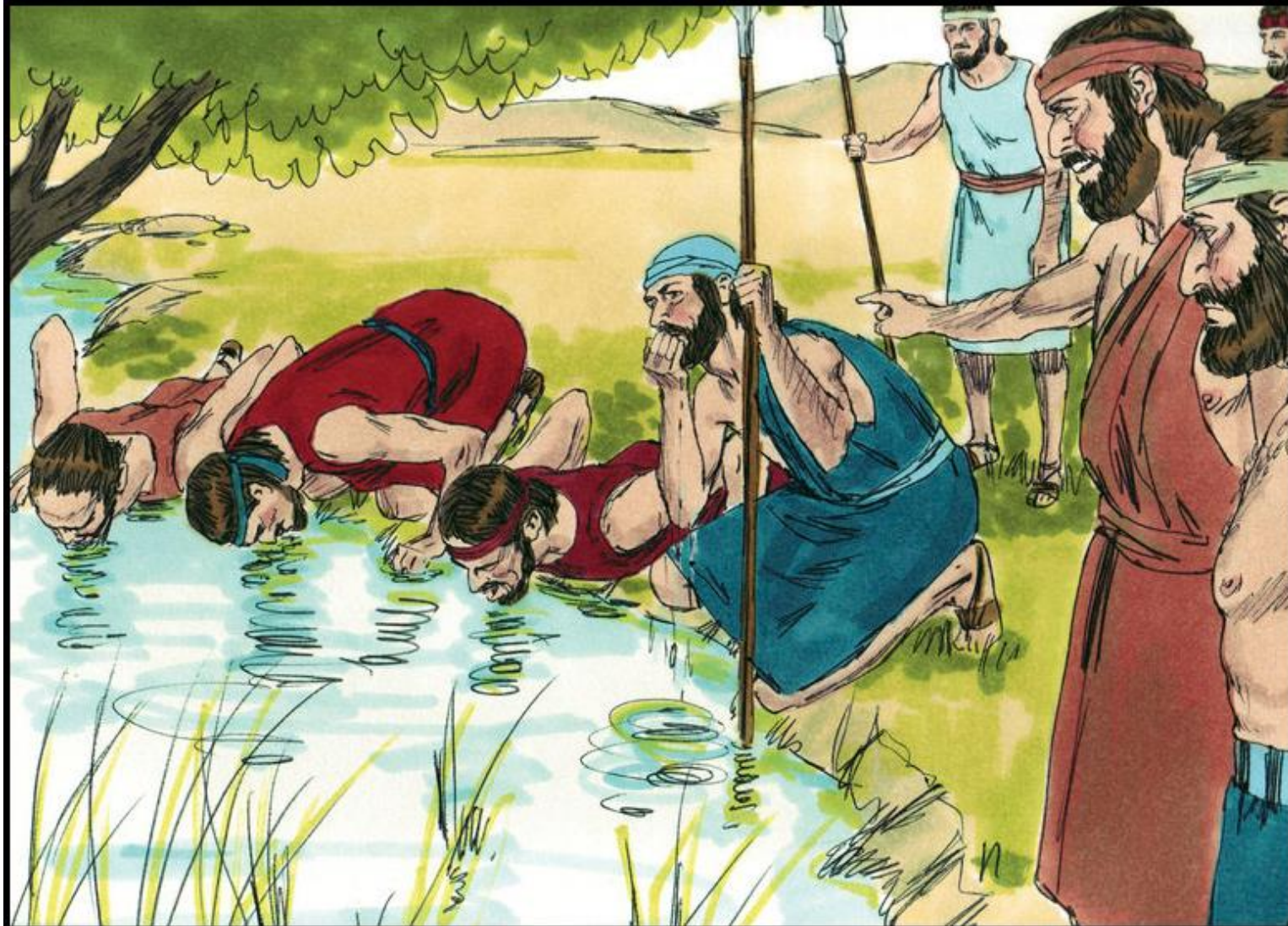
God intentionally told Israel to camp between the sea in front of them and the mountains around them, and Pharaoh behind them.

(See Exodus 14:1-4)

Consider the battle of Jericho.

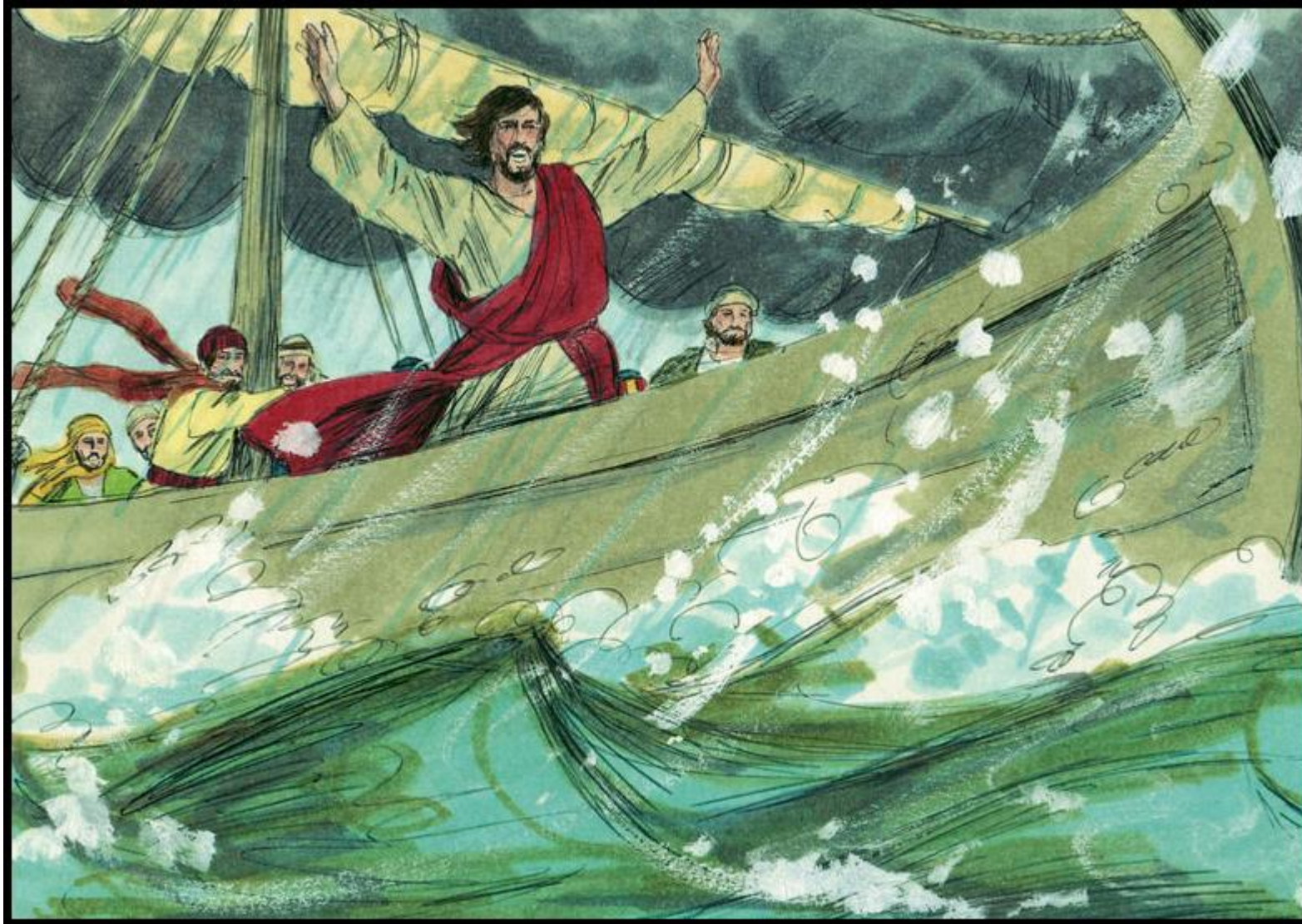


Consider Gideon's 'Army'.



God intentionally trimmed the army down to 300 men, only 1% of the original size. To fight an army of 135,000 men. Israel only had $2/10^{\text{ths}}$ of 1% of the army of Midian. (See Judges 8:4, 10)

Consider the raging storm.



He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you,**
for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly,
therefore, I will rather boast about my
weaknesses, **so that the power of Christ may**
dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with
weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with
persecutions, with difficulties, **for Christ's sake;**
for when I am weak, then I am strong.

(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

God has ordained that the prayers
of believers can, and will alter the
course of human history.



It is very obvious in the way that Luke wrote this account that he wanted to stress the importance of prayer and its impact on Peter's release.

...but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (v5)

...where many were gathered together and were praying. (v12)

“...pray for one another so that you may be healed. **The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months....

(James 5:16-17)

What is impossible for man is
never impossible for God.



It is clear that it was impossible for
Peter to free himself...and that
God was the one who freed him in the end.

an angel of the Lord stood next to him (v7)

And the chains fell off his hands. (v7)

the iron gate...opened for them of its own accord (v10)

But Jesus looked at them and said,
“With man this is impossible, but
with God all things are possible.”

(Matthew 19:26)

Do not expect to easily recognize
what God is up to.



Both Peter and the believers initially
did not immediately recognize what
God was doing.

He did not know that what was being done by the angel
was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. (v9)

They said to her, “You are out of your mind.”
...and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” (v15)

He was in the world, and though
the world was made through him,
the world did not recognize him.

(John 1:10)

Never doubt that a **small group** of committed,
praying believers can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!



It is very obvious in the way that
Luke wrote this account that he
wanted to stress the
importance of believers
meeting together
and its impact on Peter's release.

A repetitive theme in scripture is that:
God loves to use even the smallest
groups of people to impact the
world!

“...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

(Hebrews 10:24-25)



Group/Follow Up Questions