

2010 ACTS #13 CHAPTER 12 ESCAPE FROM PRISON -PETER
Acts 12:1-19

With all the publicity and warnings of missing people,
 We still have children who are being snatched.
 Even in Aberdeen this past summer we had a person approach
 Some of our local children.
 Because of that we have a whole industry
 That is trained to be put on alert.
 We have a Code of activation
 We have special search dogs that are trained.
 Police and sheriff that have ready plans.

This past year we had a missing child and activated a lot of persons
 To search a cornfield on a rainy cold day, just south of Bath.
 I drove out to search as well.
 What a happy reunion it was for that family.

Such a search involves lost animals as well.
 You remember the black cat Murry who would love to go outdoors at night,
 And then one night in October the owner let him out and he disappeared.
 The neighbors joined in the search,
 But Murry didn't appear.
 That is until the following spring when he reappeared
 clean and healthy.
 The only thing the owner could figure
 Was that he had been gone sowing his wild oats.

Everything was back to normal until that autumn,
 when Murry disappeared again. The next spring, he returned.
 So the woman decided to check with the neighbor for clues.
 When she rang the bell of an older couple down the street.
 The woman said: "A black cat? Oh, yes!
 My husband and I hated to see him out in the cold all winter,
 so we bought a cat carrier and we take him to Florida with us every winter."

The Apostle James had turned up missing,
 He was not coming back
 Because Herod had put him to death.

²He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. Acts 12:2

And now Peter had disappeared
 Seized at a church feast of Unleavened Bread

³When Herod saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Acts 12:3

What was the world coming to when they were not even safe at a church function?
 But King Herod wanted the Jews to remember this Passover
 With a public trial and execution.

Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. Acts 12:4

And taking Peter out of the early church at this time would
 Would have devastated the new local church.
 Peter was locked up.
 With two guards at the gates,
 Two guards chained to his arms.
 Truly this would be a Passover the Jews would remember.
 How little did Herod know.

I. THE PEOPLE PRAY WHEN IN CRISIS

**⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.
 Acts 12:5**

Isn't that the way it should be?

- Moses prayed and God spared Israel from judgment.
 - Joshua prayed and God caused the sun to stand still.
 - Hannah prayed and God gave her a baby boy.
 - Solomon prayed and God gave him wisdom.
 - Elijah prayed and God sent fire down from Heaven.
 - Jonah prayed and God brought him out of the belly of the whale.
 - The thief on the cross prayed and God gave him eternal life.
- I tell ya', the saints of old knew how to get in touch with God!

Today when the church prays its usually only about themselves.
 and their own problems needs and desires than
 about God's mission in the world.

That reminded me of a father who was shopping in a toy store.

He said, "That's a terrific train set. I'll buy it."

The Clerk said, "Great, I'm sure your son will love it."

The father said: "Maybe you're right, I guess I'll take two."

But here in Act 12:5, we find a church praying "without ceasing"
 for one of their own.

They had been praying for about a week

The Bible says that,

The prayers of the righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

The church prayed.

God would like nothing better than to answer our prayer.

But we must ask in faith believing.

We must be specific in our requests.

Do you pray with a specific purpose a list of concerns?

That if God would answer you would actually know it?

The telephone rang in the volunteer fire department of a small town.

The Chief of police happened to be there and picked up the phone and said:
 "Fire department."

A voice on the other end of the line frantically said, "Send the fire truck!"

Then the caller immediately slammed down the phone.

The Chief stood stunned, not knowing what to do.

In a few minutes the phone rang again.

Quickly he picked it up and said again, "Fire Department!"
 Again the voice cried, "Send the fire truck!" Again the caller immediately hung up.
 Realizing that someone's house was possibly on fire,
 He rushed outside and scanned the sky over the small town to look for smoke.
 In the 'meantime he devised a plan to keep the lady on the line if she called again.
 Sure enough the phone rang again,
 And when he picked it up he quickly asked. "Where's the fire?"
 The lady on the other end screamed, "In the kitchen," and slammed the phone down
 again. (James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 110.)

Doesn't that too often describe our own prayer life?
 Our own lack of direction and request?
 But not the early church
 They were praying specifically for Peter release.

II. PRAYER SETS THE CAPTIVE FREE

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. Acts 12:7

I LIKE THAT: when we're in a dark spot a light shines.
 When were struggling with a problem, a light shines.
 Prayer turns on the light.
 Friends if you find yourself in the dark,
 Pray, Gods will turn on the light.

Light set the soul free.
 As a child I never did like the dark.
 And I had to walk across the yard out to barn
 Many times in the dark.
 Because I got home late from BB practice.
 That old cow always needed milking.
 But that walk across the dark yard,
 Would always get my imagination going.
 Thinking about going into that dark barn,
 With the barn monsters, and bale dragons.
 Not to say anything about a skunk or civet cat.
 I just knew they were always waiting for me to open that door
 and walk into their party.
 I would stand in front of that door,
 Jerk it open,
 Grope for the light switch and turn on the light.
 Man what a relief it was.
 Fear was gone.
 There was my beloved cow,
 Waiting for me.
 May I loved the light and I liked that cow.
 I even trained her to ride home from the pasture.

Light changes things.

Now the

Angel struck Peter on the side and woke him up.

Imagine waking up to a miracle and having an angel for your alarm clock.

"Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Acts 12:7

Get-up Peter!"

If you listen with me,

I hear God saying to someone this morning who feels trapped... "Get-up!"

I hear God saying to someone addicted this morning—get up.

God is saying to someone depressed this morning —get up.

God is saying to someone who is empty and lost,

Locked up in themselves—get up.

"Get up and look up!" “. . .

Look towards the hill from whence cometh your help...

your help comes from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.!"

The chains fell off his hands, and the angel said,

"Get dressed and put on your sandals and your coat." Acts 12:7

Don't read over that part too fast, because the reason

the angel told Peter to put on his shoes and coat was

To let Peter know that

God has all time in the world in His hands!

Don't get worried about how fast things seem to be moving.

Don't get worried about how locked up things seem to be.

Because God sees our lives from eternity.

But that's what I like about God...

When worldly things have us tied up and secure,

When that bloodthirsty King Herod thought he had this servant of Christ.

Doubled gated,

Doubled guarded,

Double chained,

It was Herod's "I double dare you".

And God took that dare and laughed.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at you. Psalm 2:4

God will make a way when there seems to be no way.

God will provide a song when there is none to sing.

God will provide a savior when no hope is to be found

⁸Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals."

And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him.

Acts 12:8

Friends God wants us to be dressed for the occasion.

Sometimes we are called to study so were dressed for the occasion,

Sometimes we're called to work, so were dressed for the night.

But at all time we're called to pray to be ready for the situation.

and to follow.

⁹Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. Acts 12:9

When God touches your life it may seem like a dream.

A vision,

But it's true.

¹⁰They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Acts 12:10

Friend we don't always see what God is doing in our lives in the present,
But when we look back reality dawns upon us.
We see God's hand.
So it was for Peter.

"Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." Acts 12:11

III. WHEN PRAYER IS ANSWERED THE CHURCH IS REWARDED

If the request is wrong, God says, "No."
If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."
If you are wrong, God says, "Grow."
But if the request and timing is right, God says, "Go!"

Peter went to the house of Mary the mother of John,
Where many people had gathered and were praying.

Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. Acts 12:13

Somewhere in the world at every hour of the day
A Christian is praying.
Rhoda was the young girl who answered the door.
She got so excited she forgot to open it.

¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

The others didn't believe her.
That's the way we all are in our prayers.
We pray and ask God for an answer and then we don't believe it can really happen.
Even in the most fervent prayer meetings,
There is sometimes a spirit of doubt and unbelief.

We are like the father who cried to Jesus,
"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Mark 9:24

I know that God hears all our prayers.
Thank God he doesn't answer according to our belief.
Sometimes he answers according to our unbelief.
To show us that he is still God in all of life..

One of the strangest prayers answered in my life was when
I was about 12 years of age.
Our Olivet church had Wednesday night prayer meeting.
The whole church would come and sing, hear preaching,
And then everyone got down on their knees beside their pews
and they would take turns praying out loud.
First one and then another.

We kids were usually there as well,
 But we never prayed.
 We most often just played and listened
 I had never prayed.

Now there was a girl in that church who was always in competition with me.
 We competed over grades, over spelling B's, sports, music
 Over essays, school and friends.
 I never wanted her to get ahead of me.

So when I decided that I would pray that night, the.
 First thing I thought was "am I doing it beat Jeanine?"
 She had never prayed out loud before either.
 So I had this ongoing battle with myself.
 Should I pray, or should I wait for another day, another year.
 No, I wanted to pray.
 But I didn't want to do it to beat Jeanine.
 So at exactly the same moment I begin to pray.
 God prompted Jeanine to pray.
 We started together.
 I was stunned.
 12 years of age at exactly the same instant in eternity time.
 We pray ed together.
 God must have had a good laugh over it.
 Because I then let Jeanine pray first.
 Then I prayed.
 I never heard Jeanine pray out loud in another meeting in all the time I knew her.

¹⁵"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

Which is harder to believe?
 That God could send Peter's angel to you from heaven?
 Or that he could release Peter from Jail?
 Are you glad that God doesn't answer our prayer according to our weakness,
 But according to our need.
 How much more could be done if we would trust him.

While all this arguing is going on, Peter just kept on knocking.
¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Acts 12:16

The lesson for us today is, will we trust God today with our life?
 Will we trust him with our family and friends?
 Will we trust him with our church and our community?
 We need but ask and let God determine the answer.
 Join me in daily prayer as we trust God
 To give us Faith for the Future.