

You've Got To Pray

- Acts 12:1-11; James 5:16-18

- **Tonight I want to talk to you about the power of prayer & the peace that it brings to the lives of God's people, even in the midst of uncertainty.**
- **We will begin reading tonight from Acts 12. Now it is important to understand some of the events surrounding this chapter so that you can understand the significance of this situation.**
 - Jesus has been crucified, risen from the dead & ascended back to Heaven some 40 years prior to this book being written.
 - And though Jesus has proven Himself to the world, the church is still under heavy persecution.
 - Stephen has been martyred for his faithfulness in proclaiming the Gospel message.
 - Though Paul has been converted & began his missionary journey, he has already been imprisoned 2 different times.
 - James has been murdered for the cause of Christ by the wicked King Herod Agrippa I around A.D. 44.
 - Now Luke records the 3rd instance of Peter being imprisoned. The first time he and John only spent a single night in jail; in the second incident he and all the other apostles were miraculously released during the night and were found the next day, preaching in the temple courts.
- **READ ACTS 12:1-11**
- **Maybe b/c of Peter's prison escapes in the past, King Herod sought to make sure that nothing like that would happen again so when he arrested Peter on this 3rd occasion, he placed 16 guards to this single prisoner.**
 - The precaution seemed extreme, but the four squads of four soldiers should have provided ample round-the-clock attention. A Roman guard usually chained his left hand to a prisoner's right hand, but Peter was chained to guards with *both* hands according to v.6.
- **Herod's plan was to keep Peter in prison until the eight-day celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was over, and then he would bring him out for a public trial.**
- **Since James had recently been killed, you would think that Peter would be fearful & concerned for his life. Yet when we find him in chapter 12, the Bible records that he is asleep in the prison.**
 - How in the world could he rest at a time like this in his life & more importantly, how can we have peace through the trials of our life?
 - In part, b/c of his faith in God.
 - He believed in the promises of God that he would live a long life (John 21:18).
 - But we are also told in v.5 that the church was earnestly praying on Peter's behalf.\
- **What happened next was so unlikely that Peter didn't know if it was actually happening or if he was having another vision.**
 - An angel appeared and a bright light shone in the cell. Still, the angel had to strike Peter to wake him up.
 - The chains fell off his wrists, the various prison doors opened as they came to them, and Peter soon found himself alone and free on the street outside the prison.
- **Despite being chained to these Roman soldiers and facing the possibility of execution the next day, Peter was asleep.**
 - What gave Peter such confidence and peace? He knew that people were praying for him.
 - Psalms 4:8 – "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety."
 - Psalm 127:2 – "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

- You say, “But Pastor, what about my life, what about my situation? I worry all the time & have little peace b/c of the circumstances in my life. What should I do?”
 - Answer ... PRAY!
 - Philippians 4:6–7 – “Be careful (Don’t worry) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
- In a moment where fear could have gripped Peter’s heart & rocked his faith we find him resting in complete peace b/c he trusted in God & in the prayers of God’s people.
- **If you really believed in prayer, what would you pray for?**
- **READ JAMES 5:16-18**
- **Dr. David Gibbs said, “A good prayer life requires a good list.”**
 - If you don’t have a list of things to pray for, then chances are your prayer life is not too good or too strong.
 - What specifically are you asking God for in your prayer time?
 - The church in Peter’s day had a specific need, so they went before the throne of God with that specific need.
 - How do you pray for this church?
 - “Lord just bless my church.”
 - Or are you specific in your requests.
 - When I go to the store, which is not as often as my wife would like, she gives me a specific list of things that we need & it is important that I pick up at least what is on her list.
 - She doesn’t just tell me go pick up something from the store, right? She has specific needs.
 - Well if we get so specific about food, should we be even more specific about our church, our families, and our relationship with God.
- **So what specifically can we pray for?**