

“When Chains Fall Off”

Text: Acts 12:1-11

Subject: Everything Is Going To Be All-Right!

Introduction

1. Luke has been recording marvelous conversions in the book of Acts:
 - ◇ 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost
 - ◇ The Samaritans
 - ◇ The Ethiopian Church
 - ◇ Saul of Tarsus
 - ◇ The Gentile centurion Cornelius (and)
 - ◇ The mixed crowd in Antioch
2. Luke is about to describe the great leap forward – known as the first missionary journey.
3. But in – between the great victories, Luke chronicles a setback.
 - ◇ The death of James (and) The imprisonment of Peter

Question: Who is responsible for this assault on the Jerusalem church?

Answer: Herod Agrippa I (The grandson of Herod the Great) – the 3rd Herod of the New Testament.

(The Question Is)

- ◆ Why was Peter arrested, how did the church respond, what did Jesus do and what difference does it all make in your life today?

“Secrets from a Prison Cell” (4 Life Changing Absolutes)

I. Painful Things Can Happen To Good People In The Perfect Will of God! (v. 1-4)

- ◆ In v. 1, Herod sets out to vex (or injure) certain believers.
- ◆ In v. 2, Herod kills James with a sword.
- ◆ In v. 3 & 4, Herod apprehends Peter and puts him in prison.

Question: What's going on in Acts 12?

Answer: (v. 1) Declares, "Now about that time"

(What's The Time Luke is Talking About?)

- ◆ Acts 12 precedes the trip of Barnabas and Saul with the relief for Christians in Judea.
- ◆ The poor believers of Judea were needy because of 3 reasons:
 - #1. Many had given away their excess property & money.
 - #2. Famine had struck the land as predicted by Agabus.
 - #3. Persecution from Herod had created hardships for believers.

Question: What does Herod do?

Answer: #1. He kills James, the brother of John and friend of Jesus (And)
#2. He apprehends Peter because he saw that it pleased the Jews.

(In Other Words)

- ◇ Herod's job is to keep peace in the land and bring in the taxes.
- ◇ If he loses favor with the people, he loses his job.
- ◇ So Herod foregoes justice to strengthen his popularity.
- ◇ He imprisons Peter to hold him till after the Passover Feast. (Why?)
- ◇ His sole desire is to present Peter to the Jews in a public display – so his popularity will rise even more.

(In Plain Vanilla)

- #1. It's an injustice – to serve the carnality of King Herod (and)
- #2. It's painful and unexpected to Peter – who is simply living for the Lord.

Maybe You're Here And...

- #1. You have experienced an injustice or betrayal from someone (and)
- #2. It's been painful and unexpected and you've asked God "Why?"

(You're Normal)

- ◆ Dorcas basically makes clothes for people and Jesus raises her from the dead. (Yet)

- ◆ Stephen and James are church leaders with great influence, and Jesus allows their death in the prime of life.

(To The Natural Mind, It Doesn't Make Sense)

- ◆ Why bad things happen to good people!
- ◆ Why there are no answers to some of our (“whys”)?
- ◆ Why in God’s Sovereignty, He chooses this or that and gives us no explanation.
- ◆ Why James is killed and Peter is released!

Question: What’s the answer when you don’t have any answers?

Answer: The answer is in Deuteronomy 29:29:

“**The secret things belong unto the Lord**, but the things that He has revealed belong to us and our children.” (In Other Words)

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

- ◇ There are some things that happen to us in life that are painful – and on this side of heaven we’ll never know the reason why!!!

II. Prayer Is Not the Last Thing, But the First Thing to Put in Gear! (v. 5)

“Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” (v. 5)

Question: What’s so beautiful about (v. 5) and the church praying?

Answer: They are praying for a seemingly impossible request!

- ◇ (v. 4) Declares that Peter is guarded by 4 quaternion of soldiers.

(In Other Words)

- ◇ There are 4 squads of 4 soldiers each (on 6 hour shifts)
- ◇ Peter’s wrists are manacled to two soldiers while two other soldiers stand duty outside the cell and guard the door.
- ◇ Herod takes extra measures to be sure that Peter dies like James has died.

Question: What is your greatest weapon against the principalities and powers of darkness?

Answer: The weapon of believing prayer! (I Repeat)

Question: What kind of prayer sees God's will in heaven – enforced on earth?

Answer: (v. 5) Kind of praying.

“But prayer was made, without ceasing, of the church, unto God, for him.”

What a Discovery Here!

#1. The words “**for him**” (Peter) in the Greek language mean that there were definite energies of praying believers directed for Peter.

◇ This was a focus upon one heart-felt prayer request.

#2. The word “**by**” (HUPO) means that the church got under the burden.

◇ This is a uniting of believers together to carry the burden for an answer in prayer.

#3. The words “**unto God**” mean that the prayer was directed to God for Peter. (Or)

◇ The believers came into the very presence of God concerning Peter (Pentecostal intercession for one specific request.)

#4. The words “**without ceasing**” (EKTENES) mean: “to stretch out before God with intense concentration.”

(You're Here Today):

◇ I want you to concentrate on one (only one) person or request that you are burdened for.

◇ Forget the impossibility of 16 soldiers (v. 5) and one lonely disciple as Peter. (or your limitations)

◇ Bring your mind to approach the very presence of God concerning your one personal request!

III. God May Not Be Early, But For Sure He's Never Late!
(v. 6)

“And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night...”

Question: What night is it?

Answer: “**The same night**” (or, the night before Peter is put to death)

Question: What does the Bible say?

Answer: That God seems to wait within a few hours of Herod’s intentions – before the answer comes.

In Other Words

- ◇ The angel visits during the last watch of the night.
- ◇ Days go by as believers are praying.
- ◇ The dead-line (no pun intended) is in the morning (and the prayers keep praying)

(Application)

- ◇ Some of you live in verse 6! (It’s “the same night”)
- ◇ You’ve been praying & praying and the answer is yet unseen.

(What a Discovery Here!)

- #1. That God’s delay does not mean His denial! (and)
- #2. That God knows more than you do and His timing is always perfect!
- #3. That God honors those who refuse to give up in prayer!

IV. When Light Comes In, Chains Fall Off! (v. 7)

(v. 7) “And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison...and Peter’s chains fell off.”

Question: How can an angel get into prison?

Answer: Because our limitations are God’s opportunities.

Question: What else came in the night besides an angel?

Answer: (v. 7) “And a light shined in the dark prison in the night time.”

(In Other Words)

- ◇ There is no darkness whatsoever, that God's light cannot penetrate.
- ◇ There is no barrier that God cannot cross over to get to you!
- ◇ There is no limitation you have, that can stand up against the manifest presence of God!

(In Other Words)

- ◇ When praying Christians unite together for God's will to be done – miracles happen and “chains fall off.”

(Altar Call)

- ◇ Maybe you're here – with a burden that you're praying through!
- ◇ Maybe you're here – and you're worrying instead of praying!
- ◇ Maybe you're here – with chains that need to fall off! (Chains of...)

...Fear	...Guilt
...Worry	...Anger
...Unforgiveness	...Pornography
...Substance abuse	...A co-dependent relationship
...Alcohol	...Not sure of your salvation
...Tobacco	...An addiction of some kind

- ◇ Let's focus in on “one thing,” “one prayer,” and “one request.”
- ◇ Let's come into the very presence of God with your “one burden” above every other burden!
- ◇ Let's position ourselves before God for the answer

(What is God Saying in Acts 12?)

- #1. Painful things can happen to good people in the perfect will of God!**
- #2. Prayer is not the last thing but the first thing to put in gear!**
- #3. God may not be early, but for sure He's never late!**
- #4. When light comes in, chains fall off! (Because)**

“Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

Amen!
Bill Kirk