

*Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word*

## **The Power of a Praying Church**

**Acts 12:1-24**

*Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, Sept. 22, 2019*

### **I. God Never Promised to Protect You from All Harm**

The longer you follow Him and the closer you get to Him, the more you're willing to trust Him in the midst of trouble that He does allow into your life.

#### **A. Intimacy with Him Doesn't Guarantee any Special Protection from Him**

**Acts 12:1-2** "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

Even the apostles themselves are not protected. James has now been killed and Peter is imprisoned!

#### **B. God's Not Obligated to Explain His Ways to Us**

The sooner you settle in with this truth, the more peace you'll have as you go through the trials of this life.

In the same chapter, James is beheaded and Peter is rescued. This chapter is silent as to why God let it go down this way.

We need to trust in our Sovereign God—who is good, wise, and loving—not only when He does things that make sense to us, but all the time.

### **II. He Promised You Could Have Access to Him for Yourself and Others**

**Acts 12:5** "Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church"

'Constant prayer' being offered by the church has more to do with the intensity of the prayer than it does the repetition or constant nature of it.

#### **A. Your Prayers Should Be Fervent**

The ESV and NIV both say that the church was 'earnestly' praying to God. This is the Greek word 'Ektene' which means to do something with strenuous effort or to be stretched out, like a horse in full gallop.

#### **B. Your Faith Can Still Be Weak**

The early Christians were guilty of mixing prayer with some doubt or unbelief as they prayed earnestly for God to set Peter free. We know this because of how they responded when Peter actually showed up at the prayer meeting door!

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

**Acts 12:16** “Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.”

Their prayer was fervent, but they did not have an overwhelming robust kind of faith.

A little faith can accomplish great things if it’s placed in a great God.

### III. **He Promised that the Powers of Evil Will Never Stop the Spread of His Church**

We don’t get an explanation on the death of James, but we do get an exclamation point on the death of Herod—as if God wants to make absolutely clear who’s really in control.

#### A. **God’s Plans Always Trump the Plans of Man**

While Herod was allowed to do some horrible things, God wants to make it clear that when He wants to end someone’s reign of terror, He can do so decisively and dramatically.

**Acts 12:21-23** “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, and he was eaten by worms and died.”

#### B. **God’s Word Always Grows the Church of God**

**Acts 12:24** “But the word of God grew and multiplied.”

These early Christians were so characterized as being people who loved and spent time in God’s Word, that Luke equates the growth of the Church with the growth of the Word... because wherever they went they spread God’s Word.

We are all born into a prison of sin and shame that we need to be freed from more than anything else in this world.

**Luke 4:18-21** “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he said to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”