



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: What Now?

Date: 5/31/2026

Acts 12:1-17 | Ephesians 3:20 | John 16:33

Big Idea: God will never abandon His Church.

The early church knew what it felt like to be under pressure. Throughout Acts, the growth of the gospel has been met with real opposition - apostles imprisoned, Stephen killed, and now in Acts 12, Herod is actively targeting church leaders for political gain. James has been killed.

Peter is in prison, chained and under heavy guard. The question hanging in the air for every first-century believer was the same one we ask today when things fall apart: what's going to happen now? Acts 12 answers that question three ways - and in each one, God proves that He will never abandon His church.

1. His People Continue to Pray (Acts 12:1-5)

Verse 5 gives us one of the most powerful pictures in the book of Acts: Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. This wasn't casual, routine prayer. This was the entire church on their knees, pouring everything out before God on behalf of one person in one desperate situation.

Peter was isolated - chained, guarded, cut off from everyone he knew. But he was not truly alone. The people he had preached to at Pentecost, the thousands who had come to faith through his witness, were now interceding for him with everything they had. That is the church functioning as God designed it. Prayer is not a last resort or a formality - it is the first and most powerful response a church can have to any crisis. When we pray for one another that way, no one in this family is ever really alone.

2. He Does Unmistakable Work (Acts 12:6-11)

While the church prays, God moves. Peter is chained between two soldiers, with guards at the door, in a fully secured prison. Then a light fills his cell, an angel wakes him, and step by step he is walked out past every guard and through every gate - none of them seeing a thing. Peter himself doesn't fully grasp what is happening until he's standing outside the city alone. Then it clicks: the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod (**Acts 12:11**).

Sometimes God's work doesn't become clear until it's complete. He allowed Peter to reach an extremely low point before making His power undeniable. **Ephesians 3:20** puts it this way - God is able to do far more than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us. Whatever you are facing, God is not limited by it. When He moves, the work is unmistakable - in a family brought closer through tragedy, in a church healed from a wound, in a life freed from the prison of condemnation. Always be watching for it.

3. He Answers Prayer (Acts 12:12-17)

Peter goes straight to Mary's house - one of the places where people had been praying for him. He wants them to know their prayers were answered. When he knocks, a young girl named Rhoda hears his voice and is so overwhelmed with joy that she runs back inside without even opening the gate. She tells the group Peter is at the door - and they tell her she's out of her mind. The very people who had been praying for his release couldn't believe it when it happened. But Rhoda kept insisting, and when they finally opened the door and saw Peter standing there, they were amazed.

God answered the prayers of his church - not because they prayed perfectly, but because He is faithful. He heard them and acted. When you share a prayer request with people and God comes through, give them the chance to celebrate with you. Answered prayer builds faith, deepens unity, and gives God the glory He deserves. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever - and He is still answering the prayers of His church.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. The church prayed earnestly for Peter while he was in prison - not casually, but with everything they had. What does that kind of prayer look like in your own life, and what would it take to get there?**
- 2. Peter didn't fully understand what God was doing until it was complete. Have you ever looked back on a difficult season and seen God's hand more clearly in hindsight? What did that reveal to you about how He works?**
- 3. Rhoda was so excited about answered prayer that she forgot to open the door - and the people who had been praying didn't believe her at first. Why do you think it's sometimes hard to recognize or receive an answer to prayer even when it comes?**
- 4. The sermon draws a contrast between how believers and unbelievers responded to Peter's escape. How does knowing God is at work change the way you respond to unexpected or difficult circumstances?**
- 5. God proved He would not abandon His church through prayer, unmistakable action, and answered prayer. Which of these three means the most to you personally right now, and why?**