

• *1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. 4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. 5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. 7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." 12 So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. 15 But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" (KJV - you are mad!) Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." 16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Acts 12:1-16*

• Introduction- James the brother of John killed for their pleasure.

- Their apparent weakness was underlined by the fact that all they could do was pray.
- In this text, there are 4 sets of 4 soldiers. There are four gates that Peter had to walk through in order to be set free.

• **Calm in Crisis.**

- Peter had a Promise.
- You can sleep like a baby when your enemy is building the gallows or sharpening his sword when you have a promise!

The First Gate- The Inner Prison

- **God is more interested in who you are than what you do.**
- You have to overcome the prison of your inner self.
 - Intimidations that lie within you and hold you back.
 - Insecurities that keep you from purpose.
 - Some are held captive by their self-worth.
 - Some are held captive by their fears.
 - Some are held captive by their past.
- **Before you do anything for God you have to get anointed on the inside.**
- The only way this happens is you have to get real!
 - **God's not in the business of liberating your facade.**
- **We can't set the city free if we're bound up on the inside!**
 - The world is tired of the church preaching one thing and living another.
 - **God's not looking for perfect Christians. But He is looking for perfecting Christians!**
- If you don't walk through this first gate, you will never get out of the other ones.

The Second Gate- The Expectation of the People

- You have to be free from the expectations of other people.
 - You can spend a life time trying to please people and never get anywhere.

- You will exhaust yourself trying to meet the expectations of people.
- **If you live for peoples applause you'll die by their criticism.**
- All you have to do is get free from the expectations of other people and be what God called you to be.
- Before you please.....make sure God is pleased.
- **Theres a difference in being the vessel or being the oil.**
- **God needs people who can't be bought out.**
God needs people who can't be intimidated out. God needs people who can't be complimented out. God needs people who can't be criticized out.

Audience of One!

- God doesn't want you to be someone else. He wants you to be you!

The Third Gate- The City Gate

- There is a gate that leads to the city.
- In order to win the city, you have got to get out of this prison.
- It opened of it's own accord. **THE MIRACLE GATE!**
- **Look at this revelation. When you are free from the first and second guards, the city gates can't hold you back. They have no choice but to open.**
- The key to winning a city, is being free from yourself and the expectation of people. Conquer them and the city is yours.
 - There's a stronghold thats held you back from winning your family...

The Fourth Gate- The Church

- The people were praying, but the door was locked.
- They were praying for a miracle they really didn't believe could happen.
- **If God answered your prayer today would you even believe it?**
- Their amazement shows me their religious attitude toward prayer. They were given to the act of praying, they just didn't have any faith in their prayers.

- Thank God for the prayers He answered that you really didn't believe He would.

What would He do if we believed what we prayed?

- Do you get the picture? Those ragtag, beleaguered Christians possessed greater power than Herod's armies!
- Rhoda said, "It's a miracle, but the church said, you're mad."
 - We can not conform to a religious system that doesn't practice what it says it believes.
- The hardest gate to get through was the one at the church. When they saw that Peter was set free, they said, it's madness.
- At every other gate, they just opened. But the one at the church, he had to knock and keep knocking and keep knocking.

Rhoda

- **She could hear something everyone else couldn't.**
- **I wonder if there are miracles knocking on the door today but you've not exercised the faith to open it.**
- *Are you praying for something that is already at the door?*
- **Some of you have prayed things to the door... Get up and answer it!**
- *Why did she need them to believe her? Why didn't she just open the door?*
- **What's been keeping you from opening the door?**
 - Insecurities? Fear? Past?
 - Expectations...
- I'm trying to get some people to open the door!
- We need some Rhoda's who won't take NO for an answer!
- I need to tell someone that your healing is knocking at the door... Favor, Breakthrough,
- God's up to something!!! Can you hear it?!