

Surprising Prayers

February 4, 2018

I. Introduction

Acts 12:1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

Acts 12:2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

Acts 12:3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Acts 12:4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

II. Four Surprises Of Prayer

1. *The Peace That Is Beyond Understanding*

Acts 12:5-6 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A. God's Peace > My Understanding

Psalm 3:5-6 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.

B. Physical rest accompanies spiritual peace.

Proverbs 6:22-23 When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life,

C. Rest is found in confidence.

2. *The Supernatural Work Of God*

Acts 12:5-10 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

A. God's timing is perfect.

- God can drop the chains.
- God can give direction.
- God can open doors.

B. God can do miracles!

Luke 1:37 (ESV) For nothing will be impossible with God.

3. *The Plan Of A Sovereign God*

Acts 12:11 Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

Acts 12:2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

Hebrews 11:33-34 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

Hebrews 11:36-38 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

- A. The God who loves perfectly, knows omnisciently and acts wisely must be trusted to rule sovereignly.**
- B. Prayer places your trust in the hands of a sovereign God.**
- C. I will pray for His Yes and I will trust Him in His No.**
- D. Prayer gives you perspective you can find in no other way.**

4. The Answer To Your Prayer

Acts 12:12-17 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

- A. God is doing things you do not know.**
- B. God is answering in ways you might not have prayed for.**
- C. God will surprise you with the answer to your prayers.**

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.