

Persevering Faith Responds to Problems with Prayer and Praise

Acts 12:1-25

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? When was a time when you were disappointed in your faith or by the impossibilities of life?

? What is an impossible challenge that you are facing right now?

Acts 8:1

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him [Stephen] to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles

4 ¶ Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

1. The _____ of life challenge our walk by faith.

Acts 12:1-3

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

Martyred:

- Stephen – 1 of 7 chosen to serve Hellenistic widows (v. 7:60)
- James son of Zebedee (John's brother, v. 12:2)

1. The problems of life challenge our walk by faith.

Acts 12:4

4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5

1. The problems of life challenge our walk by faith.

Acts 12:6

6 ¶ On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.

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About to be Martyred = Peter:

- In prison
- With 16 soldiers assigned
- 2 guards, 2 chains
- locked door
- locked front gate to prison
- Sleeping

2. The _____ of united believers are met with God's power to overcome impossible situations.

Acts 12:5

5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

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Acts 12:5

5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

Acts 12:7-8

7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

Acts 12:9-10

9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

Peter's Release was Hard for Peter to Believe at First

Acts 12:9, 11

9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

3. The paradoxes of life make God's intervention hard to believe.

Luke 21:12-19 - Jesus Speaking of Things to Come

12 . . . they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. 13 "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14 "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16 "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.

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Acts 12:12

12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Acts 12:12

12 . . . many were gathered together and were praying.

Let us put prayer into practice today!

Prayer time leaders – leading groups of 3-7 to:

- 1) Introduce yourselves to each other.
- 2) Share prayer needs / problems we are inviting Jesus to address.
- 3) Pray together:
 - Your leader will Open and Close your time in prayer.
 - “Pop” in to pray out loud when you want OR
 - Pray silently if you prefer.

Problems, Persecution, Prayer, and God's Power in S. Asia:



Brother Sai



Worshippers in
Sarai

Problems, Persecution, Prayer, and God's Power in S. Asia:

Brother Sai in Jail



3. The paradoxes of life make God's intervention hard to believe.

Acts 12:12-14

12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.

3. The paradoxes of life make God's intervention hard to believe.

Acts 12:15

15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

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Acts 12:15-16

15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

Already Martyred = Jesus, Stephen and James

Unstoppable Herod / Impossible situation

4. The praise reports of victorious saints encourage us to persevere through trials.

Acts 12:17

17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

4. The praise reports of victorious saints encourage us to persevere through trials.

Acts 12:18-19

18 ¶ Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.
19 When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. . .

5. The power of God brings justice . . .

Acts 12:19-23

. . . Then he [Herod] went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

20 ¶ Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. 21 On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. 22 The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

5. The power of God brings justice and perseverance in the end.

Acts 12:24-25

24 ¶ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. 25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

Applying God's Word to Life

- 1) What is an impossible challenge that you are facing right now?
- 2) How are you currently responding to the faith challenge before you?
- 3) What role does God want prayer to play in your individual walk and in your family?