

Acts 12:1-25 Set Free!

Intro: It was July 4th 1989, I was helping to lead a High School summer camp @ Twin peaks

A) Headed into Blue Jay for a Private Lunch with Pastor Jon Courson.

B) We had a **great lunch and sat for over an hour fellowshiping and talking about the Lord.**

1) It was that day that Pastor Jon asked me to pray about coming to start a church in Oregon

2) Which God would lead us to do – **two yrs later.**

C) As we were getting up to leave – there were 2 older couples – sitting in the booth behind us.

1) Who had apparently been eavesdropping on our conversation.

D) Because they commented at what a blessing it was to hear two young men talking about the Lord.

E) Jon – Who Better

I couldn't agree more – So on this Independence day we too are going to talk about Jesus – Sets pp free!

A) Our text is Acts 12 – Story of Peter being Set free from Prison.

B) Good illustration of how Jesus desires to set pp free today from Bondage- Sin / addictions/ bitterness

1) Underlying theme of Ch. Is Prayer! **Rd v.1-5**

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.

A) Have you ever felt like you have “Hit the Wall” and you are stuck.

B) Perhaps you are overwhelmed by problems with friends, family, a child, Work –

C) If so this Chapter is for you! What we have before us is a story about how a stranglehold of evil began to tighten around the church in Jerusalem.

D) James is murdered. Peter is arrested with a prison DOOR closing behind him.

What should you do when you find yourself in a personal crises?

A) Loss of home, Investments, Marriage is unraveling, Prodigal Son or daughter – Illness

B) Whatever the Crises What do you do?

1) What should you do? – The Bible says that you should Pray!

Philippians 4:6-7

“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” NLT

Here in Acts Ch. 12 we see a bleak scenario – that caused the Church to turn to prayer.

A) A situation that had God not intervened it never would have been resolved.

B) We don't like situations like that do we?

1) We always like to have a back up plan and a plan for back up plan.

C) But God often puts us into situations where our only option is to turn to Him.

1) What we often view as our LAST RESORT – really needs to be our first resort!

The early Church is in that place.

A) Herod was the ultimate man pleaser – he saw how the Jewish leaders reacted – killed James

B) So he arrested Peter – gain further popularity.

C) Herod is called a King here – but he is really more of a Governor – {Grandson of Herod the Great!

Ceasar is Emperor – Rome is in Power over Palestine and Herod works for Rome.

A) He knows that his job security hinges on his popularity.

B) No complaints the Jews are happy – His Job was secure.

C) So after the Death of James – Herod hoping to increase his popularity has Peter arrested.

So what did the Church do? – They organized a protest and stormed the Palace! – NO

A) They boycotted all products made in Rome? – NO

B) They wrote letters to Ceasar requesting Herods removal – No

C)The Church Prayed – Constant prayer was offered to God!

D)What the church learned in a new way is that even though doors may close **on earth** there always remains **an open door** to the believer! The door to Heaven!

"The shortest distance between a problem and a solution is the distance between your knees and the floor. The one who kneels to the Lord can stand up to anything." -- Author Unknown

I want to identify four principles of Prayer that we see in this passage.

#1 Focus on God and not the enormity of the situation! They prayed to God!

A)There is nothing we face that is too big for God to handle.

B)We can subconsciously think that – This is too big for God.

1)That **thinking manifest itself in this way. – “I have got to do something.”**

**C)We start strategizing – moving – planning –
Who do I need to talk to – what do I need to do!**

D)STOP – AND PRAY! –

Matthew 21:21-22

"Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt,you can say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

A)Now of course Jesus wasn't in the excavation business. He had little interest in relocating a pile of rocks into the ocean.

B)He was using the term mountain figuratively.

1)Whatever Mt stands in your path, whatever obstacle blocks your way,

whatever difficulty immobilizes you

2)THE PRAYER OF FAITH CAN REMOVE IT!

C)But the first thing that we need to do is to shift our focus from the size of the Mountain to the sufficiency of our Mountain mover.

D)When you pray don't spend a lot of time describing your mountain to the Lord. –He knows

1)Instead focus your attention on His glory – His power – His faithfulness!

Twelve spies – 10 saw giants and Power

A)two saw a giant God!

B)The people followed the advice of the 10 and didn't believe – spent the next 40 yrs in the wandering in the wilderness. Perished

C)Israel Saw a Giant – David – saw a Giant God!

#2 Pray with Passion and Perseverance.

A)Constant prayer- that speaks of persistent prayer but more than that

B)The word constant is also translated – earnest

1)Describes the kind of prayer that Jesus prayed with in the **Garden of Gethsemne**

C)Prayer of agony – He sweat as it were great drops of blood!

D)Passionate Prayer

Do you pray with Passion? Or are your prayers lackadaisical?

A)Uh Lord – you know – I was um – or rambling

B)Remember who you are talking to- Almighty God

C)Pray with fervency!

1)There was a fervency to their prayers! Why?

D)James was beheaded – Peter was next

Constant also means persistent.

A)Keep asking – keep knocking – keep seeking –

ANSWER – Yes, no, wait.

B)If the request is wrong – God says No!

1)If the timing is wrong – God says – Slow!

2)If you are wrong God says – Grow!

C)If the request is right, timing is right, you are right – God says –GO!

So they prayed with Passion and persistence

#3 They prayed together!

A)The Church in Jersusalem was quite large – 5,000 – 10,000

B)Not the whole Church praying – obvious this is a house –

1)But this is a group of them for sure

C)Times to pray together!

1)Church prayer Sundays 7:30am

Prayer @ the Property 1st Tuesday 7am

Ladies prayer 1st Tuesday here 9am

Church prayer Wednesdays 6:30am

Missions prayer 1st Wednesday 5:30pm

Prayer fellowship 3rd Thursday 6pm

#4 God moved even though they lacked faith! V.6-19

So here they are praying: *Lord save Peter – please Lord save Peter – Lord don't let Peter die!*

A) Knock Knock – who could that be – don't they know we are praying tonight for Peter!

B) Rhoda – can you answer that – oK – Lord save Peter – Lord release Peter – set him Free Lord

1) Rhoda comes back – Uh guys – at the Door – it is Peter – He is outside – **YOU ARE CRAZY**

C) Really come and see!

D) V.16 **They opened the Door!** – Humor there – they all got up – opened the Door – AMAZING

1) The answer to their prayer was standing right in front of them and they didn't believe it!

We learn from this story that **IT IS a Little faith IN A BIG GOD** that moves mountains.

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The Story ends with Herod giving a great speech – so impressive that the people began to cry out in unison – *it is the voice of a god and not a man*

A) Herod's EGO was being stroked

B) Herod doesn't correct them – but he accepts their praise – takes the glory for himself

C) Interesting that the Jewish historian Josephus comments on this very incident - **He adds the fact that Herod was dressed in pure silver**

D) The sun hit the garment and it shined!

1) Herod gets all caught up in the adulation and the Bible says here – God killed him – worms ate him

E) God struck him for not giving glorying to God!

RADICAL

Look at how the story begins and ends

A) At the beginning of the Chapter Herod is on a Rampage, persecuting and threatening the Church

B) The Chapter begins with a seemingly all powerful Herod wrecking havoc on the Church.

C) Herod had on his side the power of GOVT – the sword and the threat of prison.

1) But the Church had the ALMIGHTY GOD on their side and they prayed!

The Chapter opens with Herod flexing his muscles – James is beheaded – Peter is imprisoned

A) The Chapter closes with Herod Dead – Peter free and the **word of God triumphing**

B) Man has his will but God always has his way!

1) God is never not in control – He gives Satan the god of this world – room – but short lived

But here is what I want you to think about in Closing

A) The Church was praying – Jesus released Peter from Prison – doors

opened.

B)It took a miracle to open the prison doors, but Peter **had to walk thru the Doors**

C)It took a miracle to get Peter out of Prison but Peter **still had to walk to Mary's house.**

**D)It took a miracle of Jesus to bring Laz back from the dead –
1)But pp still had to cut him lose of the Grave clothes**

E)Jesus multiplied the bread and fish to feed the 5,000 – Disciples were called to pass it out

My point is this – God does His part – but we also have to do our Part!

A)We have to act when God answers –

Listen God did His part in providing a way for pp to be set free – from the Power and bondage of Sin!

A)Set free – from Addictions, set free from Bitterness, all ramifications of sin!

B)He sent Jesus to come to this earth – to be the Sacrifice for Sin – Lamb of God.....

C)Jesus death on the Cross – paid the penalty for sin

D)Also – broke the power of Sin – Break those Chains

Today we sit here a room full of pp SET FREE!

A)Former Drug addicts, Alcholics, Bondage to materialism – bitterness –

fear – ANGER

B) We have been set free – by the saving power of Jesus – Died and Rose again.

C) You too can know that freedom today as well

Jesus did His part – you need to do yours!

A) Your part is to embrace what He did on calvary

Believe in Him – walk with Him

B) Turn from your sin – the pain – turn to the Savior

Nail scarred hands – His wounds –

1) Wounds of Love – SET YOU FREE TODAY