



## Sermon Series

# Praying Our Way to Pentecost

### The power of a praying church Acts 12

Have you ever had a dream that seemed so real, that you wondered afterwards whether the experience might have actually happened? That's what happened to Peter in Acts chapter 12.

This morning we are going to look at the power of a praying church. My grandfather used to say,

Much prayer = Much Power  
Little prayer = Little Power  
No prayer = No Power

Prayer is a powerful weapon. It's like a missile. It can be aimed anywhere in the world and it hits its target at the speed of thought, *every.single.time.*

Prayer is an evangelistic tool. Your children can tune you out. Your neighbors can slam the door in your face. But they cannot keep the Holy Spirit from knocking at their heart's door in response to your prayers.

When you pray regularly, irregular things happen on a regular basis.

I want to begin this morning by asking three questions.

1. Am I praying as I ought to prayer?
2. Are we praying as we ought to pray?
3. Are you praying as you ought to pray?

Let's take a look at our scripture in Acts chapter 12.  
Acts 12:1-5

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. <sup>2</sup>Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four <sup>10</sup>squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

<sup>5</sup>Peter was therefore kept in prison, but <sup>10</sup>constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

In verse 5 we see the essence of intercessory prayer. Peter was "in prison, but constant prayer was offered To God, For Him, By the Church".

Every Sunday morning, we have a time of intercessory prayer in our morning worship services. We are offering prayers To God, For Others, By the Church.

As we go through this passage, we will see that the church was not just offering token prayers or lip service. They were serious about praying and their prayers made a difference.

Let's keep reading. Look at verse 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.

What a minute. Peter is sleeping? In prison? The night before he is to die? Now that is some kind of trust in God!

The Apostle Paul's tells us, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ¶and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7

Peter is sleeping!! God gave him a peace that surpasses understanding. And what is the church doing? They are praying (v.5).

This causes me to pause and consider,  
Am I praying as I ought to pray?  
Are we praying as we ought to pray?  
Are you praying as you ought to pray?

Back to our scripture in verse 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.

The passage says the angel of the Lord stood by him. I am having flash backs to the Hebrew children in the book of Daniel who refused to bow down to the King. After they were thrown into the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar looked in and asked "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the<sup>¶</sup> Son of God." Daniel 3:24,25

God stood beside these men just as he stood beside Peter in the prison! And just like he stands beside us. He promises to never leave us or forsake us!

God said in Isaiah, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ¶For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; Isaiah 43:2,3

Even in prison God is standing beside Peter and verse 7 says the angel, struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.

This deliverance inspired Charles Wesley to write "My Chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee." (And Can it Be, that I Should Gain 1738)

Look how God is responding to the prayers of the church as they intercede for Peter. When I read this it causes me to question,

Am I praying as I ought to pray?  
Are we praying as we ought to pray?  
Are you praying as you ought to pray?

Verse 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." ¶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.

He thought he was dreaming!

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>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.”

<sup>12</sup>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, Having a pot luck dinner! NO, NO, NO!

They were gathered together PRAYING! No lip service in this church. It was in the middle of the night! But remember verse 5? Peter was in prison but constant prayer we offered to God for him by the church! The church was praying!! Look what happens next, this is great!

Verse 13- <sup>13</sup>And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup>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.

I love this! The church is knocking at heaven’s door with a request and God is knocking at their door with the answer. Peter is standing at the door!!

This makes me question-

Am I praying as I ought to pray?

Are we praying as we ought to pray?

Are you praying as you ought to pray?

Verse 15, Peter is knocking, Rhoda tells everyone its Peter.

<sup>15</sup>But they said to her, “You are beside yourself!” Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.” <sup>16</sup>Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished.

One version says, they were amazed!

My grandfather was right, Much Prayer does equal Much Power!

Doesn’t this make you want to pray? I want to be a man of faith. I want to be a man of prayer. I confess, sometimes I try it in my own strength. I try to fix it myself. I wish I had the forethought to start with God, but sometimes I only ask for his help AFTER I’ve tried my way.

I find we tend to pray two different kinds of prayers.

1. Get me out prayers
2. Get me through prayers

“Get me out prayers” are praying for God to help us out of a problem or circumstance. “Get me out of this job”. “Get me out of this financial mess”. “Get our church out of debt”. “Get me out!” And these are good prayers. There is nothing wrong with them. The church was praying Get Peter Out! And God answered in a miraculous way.

But then there are “get me through prayers”- In addition to praying for deliverance, we need to learn prevailing prayers.

We need to ask God to give us the grace to sustain, the strength to stand firm, the willpower to keep on keeping on.

There is a difference between “praying out” and “praying through”.

Some of you have been going through the same struggles for the last three years. You've prayed a lot of "Get me out prayers".

Perhaps it's time to pray, "get me through prayers".

For whatever reason, for reasons I cannot explain to you, perhaps God is allowing you to go through this trial to build character. To teach you something, to strengthen your resolve, to minister to someone else, to be a witness of his grace. Whatever the reason, he hasn't got you out, so asking God to get you through would be an appropriate prayer today.

Many of you are going through a difficult season right now. But I have confidence that God will get you through if you keep your eyes on him.

Every discouraging time I have had in my life has been when I took my eyes off Jesus and put them on my circumstances. Storms deplete our tanks. When your tanks are empty, aka spiritual tank, financial tank, emotional tank, love tank. You lose perspective. And in the middle of the storm the enemy comes along and whispers, "I think you should quit", "Why bother", "You're not gonna make it", "No one cares".

Listen to me! I have come up here this morning to tell you Satan is a liar. You shouldn't quit. You shouldn't give up. Hold on to Jesus. Don't let go. Jesus will get you out and He will get you through. If there is anyone who can help you in a storm. If there is anyone who can keep you from ruining your life, it is Jesus Christ.

So let me ask you again,

Are we praying as we ought to pray? Are you praying as you ought to pray?

Let's gather around these altars this morning. Bring your family. Let's unite our prayers together. Do you have sin to confess? Are you in need of God's strength and power? Come and let us pray with you. Let's pray for our church and denomination. Let's intercede for our prodigal sons and daughters. Come and talk with Jesus.

Much prayer = Much Power

Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" Let's make it a house of prayer this morning.