

# The Prayer for a Believer's Welfare

*Acts 12:1-19*

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Introduction: Two weeks ago we considered the first of three examples of corporate prayer by the Church found in the Book of Acts. Acts 4:23-31 records the church's prayer for a bolder witness. There we witnessed the power of prayer as the believers' prayer for & experience of great boldness in the proclamation of the Gospel. Note with me this evening a second example of corporate praying as we see the church offering earnest prayer for a believer's welfare, recorded in Acts 12: 1-19. Note in this text 3 lessons in prayer: (1) the sovereignty of God; (2) the supplication to God; & (3) the strategy by God. Compare the prayers of the early church to the prayers of our church today.

## I. The **sovereignty** of God (12:1-2)

### A. God sees our *trials* (:1-2) >

1. God allows Herod to kill James.
2. God causes Peter is be spared.

Ask why? It is the sovereign will of God. "It was the throne in heaven that was in control, not the throne on earth" (Wiersbe). Compare Acts 4:24-28, "*...For to do whatsoever Thy hand & Thy counsel determined before to be done.*"

### B. God leads our *steps* (:3-4) >

1. Herod allow Peter to be arrested.
2. Herod intends Peter to be killed.

Summary: "It is good to know that no matter how difficult the trials or how disappointing the news, God is still on the throne & has everything under control. We may not always understand His ways, but we know His sovereign will is best" (Wiersbe).

## II. The **supplication** to God (12:5-6)

### A. The fervent *praying* of the church (:5) >

1. Their praying was serious – "*...but prayer was made without ceasing...*"
2. Their prayer was specific – "*...of the church unto God for him.*"

### B. The faithful *resting* of Peter (:6) >

1. He was assured of the prayer of God's people (:5).
2. He was assured of the peaceful sleep from God (see John 21:18-19 & cf. Psalm 4:8).

## III. The **"strategy"** of God (12:7-19)

### A. Extraordinary *deliverance* for Peter (12:7-10) >

1. Miraculous release from the chains (:7).
2. Miraculous release of the gates (:10).

Note: Peter was "*smote*" awake by the angel; Herod was "*smote*" dead by God (12:23).

Application: Consider the power of a praying church: "The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel" (Thomas Watson, Puritan preacher).

B. Ordinary obedience by Peter (12:7-11) >

1. He arises & gets dressed (:8).
2. He follows & is “amazed” (:8-11)

Application: “God alone can do the extraordinary, but His people must do the ordinary” (Wiersbe).

Peter’s realization: Acts 12:9-11 > He thought at first that he was sleeping; he “*came to himself*” – cf. Winnie the Pooh, “think, think!” Note also the answer of the church’s prayers.

C. Reluctant acceptance of Peter’s release (12:12-19) >

1. The unbelief of Rhoda (:13-14).
2. The unbelief of the church (:15) – “*It is his angel*” (Consider “guardian angels” Mt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14; Ps. 34:7).

Application: “We must face the fact that even in the most fervent prayer meetings there is sometimes a spirit of doubt & unbelief. We are like the father who cried out to Jesus, ‘*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief*’ (Mk. 9:24). God graciously honors even the weakest faith, but how much more He would do if only we would trust Him” (Wiersbe).

Illustration: “The answer to their prayer is standing at the door, but they don’t have faith enough to open the door & let him in! God could get Peter out of a prison, but Peter can’t get himself into a prayer meeting!” (Wiersbe).

Conclusion: Recall again the prayers of the early church. We saw 2 weeks ago the church’s prayer for a bolder witness (Acts 4:23-31). Here we have the church’s prayer for a believer’s welfare. Consider then & now the prayer of God’s people for those in prison. See Hebrews 13:3, “*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.*” “Pray for them as you would want them to pray for you if your situation were reversed” (Wiersbe).

What lessons do we learn from this text? The sovereignty the God; the supplication to God; & the strategy by God. How should we pray as we learn from the example of the early church?