

Acts 12:1-25

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Date: 07 June 2023

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for this evening, Lord. Thank you for just preparing the way before us, Lord. Thank you for just allowing us, Lord, to know you, to be those that have the truth, Lord. We are such a small group, Lord. And, Lord, there's so many people out there who just have no clue, Lord, no idea about the truth. And here we are, Lord. Why us? Why are we so privileged, Lord, to know you and to know your word, Lord. And then to know your word in such a way that we recognize, Lord, that it's what gives us life. Lord, as we abide in the word, then the word abides in us, that it produces fruit, it produces life, Lord. So many of the problems in this world, Lord, are just taken care of by being in the spirit and in the word. And so I pray that tonight, Lord, you would do that in our hearts.

You just set us free from whatever it is, Lord, that's holding us bound. That, Lord, you would show us a new aspect of your grace. We thank you and love you. And in Jesus' name, amen. All right, Acts chapter 12. Now we are switching gears back to Peter. We had a brief hiatus there where Barnabas went and grabbed Saul, who had been over a decade, kind of on his own there in the region of Cilicia and Syria. And the disciples, the apostles, they had sent Barnabas to Antioch to verify the work that was happening there. And then Barnabas is like, hey, this is a little too much for me. I know a guy.

So he goes and gets Saul, who will soon be Paul. And so then there's this dearth, as it's called. There's a plague coming or famine on the world. Agabus, whose name meant locust, was sent to tell them this. And so the disciples in Antioch, they decide to send a love gift back to Jerusalem. They send it by the hands of Paul or Saul and Barnabas. And then chapter 12, he picks up in verse 1 and says, now about that time, Herod, the king, stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church.

And so at this time, you have Herod. This is Herod Agrippa I. This would be the grandson of Herod the Great, who was the one who put the babies to death at the time of Jesus's birth.

This is his grandson, Agrippa I. And he would be the last, what would be considered the last of the Jewish kings ruling under Rome's authority. Rome's kind of okay. They gave him the okay to rule.

[2 : 40] But after him, we would kind of do away with the Herods. And Rome then steps in and fully takes over. Pontius Pilate, if you remember, he was not over all of Judea. He was just over one region at that time. He was a kind of a governor for the one region. The rest was ruled. The rest of Jerusalem, I'm not Jerusalem, I'm sorry. Israel would have been ruled by the Herods. This is the last of that.

But anyway, he at this time decides to stretch forth his hand and vex, where that word vex means to entreat with evil intent. So if you remember when Paul or Saul persecuted the church, he's going to tell us later on that he did that with zeal. He did that because he thought he was doing that.

He thought that was the thing to do, a godly thing to do. So the end result's the same between Herod and Saul. But Saul had a totally different motive. And God saw that motive and he saw the heart and he steps in and changes Saul's life. Herod, total evil intent. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw it please the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

Then were the days of unleavened bread. So we're going to see as we go through this, there's going to be a theme, delivered, deliverance. We're going to see that Herod delivers Peter to prison. We see he first takes James and kills him. But the theme is deliverance. I just thought this was pretty neat as I went through and just saw these areas that God delivered. In verse 2, James is delivered to life.

He's delivered from this life through death into life. God delivers him to life. Verse 4, Peter is delivered to prison by Herod. Verse 5 through 6, Peter is delivered while in prison. We'll see what

that means as we get there. Verses 7 through 11, Peter delivered from prison. Verse 12, we see that Peter was delivered by prayer. Verses 13 through 17, Peter was delivered to fellowship. We'll see what that means when we get there. Verse 18 through 20, Tyre and Sidon delivered by an intercessor. That's because Herod was displeased with them. So they went and found a guy to intercede on their behalf. Verses 21 through 23, Herod is delivered to judgment. And then as we end the chapter, all men are delivered by the word.

[5 : 01] And so James becomes the first guy of the apostles to be put to death. Remember, Stephen was the first martyr. There's many other Christians who've been who've been martyred by Saul and others. But this is the first of the 12. Until this point, they were untouchable, it seemed. They had been put in prison many times and then released miraculously or threatened or beaten and then released. But none of them have been put to death yet. And James is. If you remember when Judas, I guess you could say he was the first of the 12 of the chosen by Jesus. When he committed suicide, they, the church felt they needed to then bring in a new guy. They brought in Matthias. It was justice or Matthias. The lot falls of Matthias. He is then numbered within 12. They don't do that here because James is a martyr dying for his faith. Judas was an apostate and they felt they needed to replenish that number. If you remember when James and John, when they're with Jesus in his ministry, they came to him and they said, hey, grant us that we may sit one on your right hand and one on your left hand when you come into the kingdom. And Jesus said unto them, you know not what you ask. Can you drink of the cup I drink of and be baptized with a baptism I'm baptized with? And they said, we can. Yeah, got this, Jesus.

And Jesus said unto them, you shall indeed drink of the cup I drink of. And with the baptism I'm baptized with, shall you be baptized? But to sit on my right hand and the left hand, that's not for me to decide but for my father. And so here we see James, the fulfillment of that. He is receiving that same baptism and drinking the same cup. And then Herod, he sees in verse three, and because he saw it please the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread or Passover. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison and delivered him. There we see that word delivered, our theme, delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. That word in the Greek is just paschal, meaning Passover, not actually Easter. So here is a politically opportune moment for Herod to make a move here that will get the people on his side. And we are moving into a season in our world right now where politically opportune moments are happening. And you will see people making politically opportune moments. They will say things to get on the side of the people. We're going to see by the end of the chapter that

Herod is just totally done with these people. He used them when he had the moment to use them, when it was an opportune moment, and then he moved on. And so he takes this politically opportune moment, grabs Peter, throws him in prison. And verse four, And when he had apprehended him, he put him to prison and delivered him to the four quinturions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

This is his own self-determination. And we're going to see as this chapter goes on with Herod, that self-determination, it leads to self-confidence, self-delusion, and then self-destruction.

And so as he begins to determine for himself, his own course, what he's going to do, well, it leads to self-confidence. He feels like, hey, it's working. All right. I just got James, put him to death. The people loved it. Well, I'm going to go for Peter. He's one of the big three, Peter, James, and John. Well, that leads to self-confidence and self-confidence. We think, well, that's a good thing.

Self-confidence. No, it's not a good thing. We need confidence that then results in our lives that projects confidence, not in ourselves, but in what the Lord can do for ourselves. So self-confidence for the believer is confidence in what God can do for me and through me, not confidence, what I can do for myself. Then it's going to lead to the self-delusion where he thinks he's a God and eventually to self-destruction. But he intended this. This was his intent of what he shall do. Job 38, 11 says, in speaking of the sea and the waves, Job said, hitherto, or this, I'm sorry, this is the Lord speaking to Job and said, hitherto shall thou come, but no further. And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

And so there was a point where the Lord said to Herod, that's it, buddy, because God will prevent what man intended and what God intended man cannot prevent. And so Herod had this intent. And we see here where it says those four quaternions of soldiers. That's just a night watch. There's four soldiers. They were considered the night watch.

[9 : 46] And so he sends, he orders not just one set of four, but four sets of four. And we're going to eventually see Peter is bound between two soldiers. But why would he do that? Well, how many times have these guys been let loose? You know? So if you think of Herod coming in, these, you know, the Sanhedrin, these, these silly priests, they don't, they don't know what they're doing. How many times these guys have slipped out of their hands? So he's coming in with the might of Rome. He's like, I know how to do this. Nobody's going to get these guys out. Oh, sure. Some miracle. I'm sure somehow they got let out of prison. Right. You guys are just inept. Let me handle this. So here he's quadrupled the night watch. And then he's got Peter. He's going to be between these two soldiers, but God's going to prevent what he's intended. And yet no amount of prevention on man's part can prevent what God's intending.

No amount of politically correct and politically opportune moments will prevent what God's intending. And we're in a world right now, unfortunately, even many believers are attempting or thinking they can prevent what God's intending. You know, Jesus said, as we've looked at in Genesis, that in the last days, they should be as the days of Noah. You know, when you see these things begin to come to pass, look up. Redemption draws near. So many people are seeing these things come to pass and they're like doubling down on looking for some solution here when God has an intent. And that intent is to play out the rest of this story and wrap things up. I'm ready to go. Let's do it.

So as we're going to go through this, we're going to see prayer and how prayer is not to move God's heart, but to allow myself to be in a place where God can move my heart so that I can be part of what God is intending. But anyway, so here, Peter, he gets put in jail. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church or of the church unto God for him. So we see in verse five that Peter's put in prison. He's chained between these two guys, but the church is praying.

The church is on its knees. And the word there for prayer is not just like they offered up a prayer, but it's an intense, focused prayer. I want to see a result of that. Peter will be delivered.

So the question is, as we go through this, did prayer move God to release Peter? Well, no, I don't think so. I think prayer gave God the opportunity to move people. So God is always moving. His will is always being done. It's kind of like we talk about a lot, Joseph and Pharaoh.

[12 : 33] Joseph brought the people into Egypt. Pharaoh took them out. God was going to bring his people into Egypt and God was going to take them out of Egypt. Pharaoh could have chosen to work with the Lord, but instead he worked against them. God still used him. You can see what we see with like Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar eventually. And then Artaxerxes, these men who eventually they yielded to the Lord, you know, and said, Oh, like Artaxerxes writes out the decree, go back to Israel, go back to Jerusalem, gives them all kinds of provision to go and do that. He could have been a Pharaoh. God was still going to send his people back to Israel at that time. So when we pray, we're not really moving God in the sense of convincing God to change from A to B. You know, God's desire, it's always to move in a way that's according to his will and his word. It's more, it gives God opportunity to move people.

And to us, it seems like, Whoa, look what God did there. He did. He did. Yes, he did it. But there was also where he works and uses us in our faith and uses these vessels that choose to come alongside him and work with him. A couple scriptures on prayer, just as we kind of move into this. Paul tells us in Timothy, I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. So that gives us an idea without wrath and doubting. Why would I pray in wrath and doubting? Well, because prayer is not to be used in a way that, well, God get that person, you know, or God take them out. Even as the Lord is wrapping things up and is moving things to the end, he's not willing that any should perish and nothing and not doubting. First Thessalonians 5:17, pray without ceasing. It's kind of self-explanatory that we always have this attitude of response to the Lord.

Philippians 1:3 to 5, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. And we see that linkage of prayer and fellowship. James 5:16, confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. That's not the idea that the Roman Catholic Church takes and says, well, we should confess to one another. It just means that we confess to one another. The idea is, hey, I'm struggling with this. Would you pray for me so that I may be healed? And the effectual

fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. We will see that in this chapter. Matthew 6, 6. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut the door, pray to your father, which is in secret. Your father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. And that's what the church is going to do here for Peter. They're going to go in, gather together, and pray for him.

[15 : 36] Excuse me. And lastly, Mark 11, 24. Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, you shall have them. So one of the keys, as we looked at those verses going through there, is this idea of expecting God to work and believing, having faith, the effectual fervent prayer.

You know what the church didn't have right now as they're praying for Peter? They didn't expect God to work. They're going to be astonished when eventually Peter gets released. They didn't have that faith. And yet we see God answering prayer. Because what does he say?

If you have faith, the size of a kumquat, no, mustard seed, just a little thing, a little mustard seed.

That's all he needs. And it lets him loose to act. And so here's Peter. The church is gathered.

They're praying for him. In whatever their attitude, there's some semblance of those verses that we just looked at. Their heart is towards the Lord. You know, many times the Lord sees not what we expect to see from ourselves. We expect the end result in the process, right? So there they're praying, like, I don't know how this is going to work out. It must be lack of faith. I'm doubting. But they're there. But they're praying. So we expect the end result in the process, where the end result doesn't come until God moves. And then we see the end result. So don't sell yourself short if you find yourself in the process, not where you want to be at the end result, if that made sense.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. So Herod would have brought him forth. But man's methods cannot contain God. Herod had his desire, but God is going to do something different. And Peter was doing what? Sleeping. Why would he sleep? Well, how many times had he been delivered before? Many times. And James had just been put to death. Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he restored him? He said, Peter, it was after Peter said, what about this man? When speaking of John, he's like, what are we going to do with him? And Jesus is like, don't worry about him.

[17 : 48] You know, you go feed my sheep. And he said, Peter, the day will come where another will lead you by the hand, and you'll go where you do not want to go. So Peter's probably thinking, it's James, then it's Peter, then it's probably John. You know, go down the list. So he's like, yes, I'm going home. He's not worried about it at all. You know, we don't, especially in the West, we don't live among trying times for the church. They're trying times because of apostasy, but not because of persecution. I've been listening to this book. It's Church History in Plain English. It was, it's really good. But as they're moving through history, it's funny because when there's persecution by Rome, there are people who were so keen to be counted among the martyrs that they would kind of like go and offer themselves to be killed. Like, kill me next. I'm a Christian. And they actually had to, like the church almost had to step in and say, we're not going to accept those people anymore as martyrs who do that just because you want to martyr yourself. Well, after Constantine, when the church becomes the state religion, there's no way to martyr yourself anymore. So what they did then, they did self-martyrdom, and that's where you see the rise of the monastic order, where they would go out in the desert, and they would say, oh, well, I have to, I have to then do this kind of self-martyrdom and deny myself of all, you know, fleshly appetites or pleasures in any way, shape, or form. So we don't really experience that, but Peter would have experienced that persecution. He would have seen friends killed.

He would have been, you know, in Jerusalem when Saul was there and wreaking havoc, and how many people from his flock were taken. And he would have had the stories and the experiences of people that stood for their faith, that had Jesus there with them, filling them with their spirit. Maybe he would have seen some, kind of like Stephen, when they saw his face shining as an angel. So for him, I don't think it was like, what's going to happen? He's probably like, I can't believe it's my turn. Yes, I get to go.

So he's at rest. He's resting in God's will. And here we see our first deliverance for Peter. The long before Peter is delivered from prison, he was set free in prison. And the Lord would do the same for us. He would have us set free in what we're already going through, long before he ever takes us out of it. So Peter was delivered long before he was set free. Actually, he was already delivered in his

heart, in his mind, whatever, Lord. You think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, where they say to Nebuchadnezzar, whether God delivers us from your hand or not, you know, we will be delivered. This is, this is not a question for us. We're ready for what God's going to do. And then we get this exciting moment. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him and a light shined in the prison. And he smote Peter on the side and raised him up saying, arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. A lot of songs are in about that. You know, I rose, went forth and followed the, you know, my chains are gone. So here's Peter, the angel comes. I just picture this poor angel. It's probably his first job. He's so excited, right? This first gig. Hey, go down there. You're going to let Peter out. He's like, the light shines in the prison. And he's like, I am the angel of the Lord sent to release you. And the next thing he hears is, and he's like, get up. Do you know how long I've been practicing? Oh, it took me three years to get to get this spot. So Peter's asleep. He's totally missing the whole thing. When was the last time we saw Peter sleeping? He was missing the whole thing. [21 : 35] It was a little different though, then sleeping when he should have been praying here. I think he should have been sleeping, right? There's time to pray in trials and there's a time to rest through him. And Peter at this point was resting in the Lord's will. And so the angel tells him, arise, arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. There's a couple of things we can see here about the angel. As we move into verse eight, the angel said unto him, gird yourself, bind on your sandals. And so he did. And he said unto him, cast your garment about you and follow me. So the angel is giving him very clear directions, very specific directions too. And whenever we see the angels intercede or intervene in believers' lives, in God's people's lives, they always come with direction that leads to deliverance. Our theme here, deliverance. If you look through scripture, angels will come and give messages, maybe of pronouncement or judgment. But if it's to God's people, God sends them as ministering spirits. He sends them to give direction or deliverance. You think of even when like Gabriel comes to Mary and announces to her, hey, you're going to have the Messiah. Well, he's giving very clear direction on what's going to happen. And essentially he's saying, and deliverance. Deliverance is coming by way of this announcement as well. And so the angels, they always come to God's people with direction that leads to deliverance. And Peter, he follows.

And he went out and followed him, but he wist not that it was true, which was done by the angel, but thought that he saw a vision. He thought this was some miraculous thing. He thought that God was showing some vision. And when they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leads unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord. And they went out and passed on through one street and forthwith the angel departed from him.

So they come and they pass through the prison, pass through each ward of the prison, where the guards are just standing there kind of looking forward to their sleep or whatever. Peter thinks it's a vision. And they get to the iron gate and it just kind of opens by magic.

And Peter walks out like, wow, that's really neat. I'd like to see something like that. But if you look in scripture, when God does the miraculous, it's always with a specific purpose. It's never just for show. It's never just to make a big splash.

It seems like a big splash because it's so miraculous and amazing, but it's for a purpose. It's for a purpose. It brings deliverance. It declares his glory. There is a time where we see the miraculous taking place and it almost seems like it's the Lord, but then there's discernment to realize it's not the Lord. We'll eventually get there.

[24 : 27] Acts 16, Paul and Barnabas are in Thyatira. They have just met Lydia and they're walking through the streets day after day. And it says, And it came to pass as we went to prayer.

So Luke is with them. A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. Luke's writing this after the fact.

They don't think it was like, oh, it is the fair damsel who brings much gain to her masters by soothsaying. You know, I don't think they knew that. He knew that at the moment. But what they did know was this. The same followed Paul and us and cried saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

Well, that could be the Lord. At face value, that might be the Lord. Kind of a miraculous word of knowledge. But look what happens. And this she did many days.

Kind of became this thing where it's all about the show. You know, that these guys were using her ability to kind of like, Look what she's doing. Look what she can do. Kind of advertising their product.

[25 : 33] But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And so God is not interested in putting on a show for the sake of a show.

He has a purpose. And whenever he steps in and does the miraculous. And the same here with Peter. This wasn't just to wow Peter or the church or the guards. God had a purpose in this. It was to deliver Peter. But it was also a lesson for the church here. In prayer, I believe. And in the middle of verse 10 is where we were.

And they went out and passed on through one street. And forthwith, the angel departed from them. And when Peter was come to himself, He said, Now I know a surety that the Lord has sent his angel and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

Good job, Peter. He's always quick to get it, wasn't he? He said, Well, now I know of a surety. You got to hand it to Peter, though. In the middle of what he thought was a dream, he continued to follow.

[26 : 44] He didn't have all the information. He was actually a little confused. He thought this was just a vision. But his heart was still, I'll walk in obedience. I'll still follow. I don't dream.

I say I don't dream. But my kids say, Dad, everybody dreams. I don't ever remember any dreams. The few I have are really strange. Once in a while, though, in a dream, I'll wake up and be like, Whoa, in my dream, I had a choice and I chose the Lord.

Or, oh, I prayed for someone in my dream. And I get really excited about that. Because like, wow, even in my subconscious, something's working right. And so here's Peter in this sense, where it's like, Man, what a cool testimony.

Like, well, I thought I was dreaming. But the angel said, Obey. And so I was willing to do it. And Peter now comes to himself. And what is the wording here? I like where it says, He was delivered from all the expectations of the people of the Jews.

Have you ever lived under other people's expectations? It's not very fun. You know, with training children and raising children, when our kids were little, and then watching people with their kids around us, you could always tell, mainly because once you raise your own kids and see how they act and react, you can tell other people how they are with their kids in their home.

[27 : 55] And I realize that your kids will always live up to your lowest expectations, which sounds really bad. But they're not going to on their own be like, You know what? I can get away with this, but I want to go for that.

You know, you know, it's like, Well, I didn't just sweep the floor. I pressure washed the house too. Just because, you know, that doesn't really happen. So what we need, you need to do as a parent is you have to raise your bar, not theirs.

So I can't be like, Well, I expected more of you. Well, no, you have to raise expectations for yourself. Raise your own expectations of how you're going to act and you lead them. And that raises that lowest expectation that they're going to live by.

But man's expectation on people, when man puts his expectation on us, it's always a burden. It always is a burden. Because as soon as you live up to it once, well, there's the expectation. You have to live up to it again and again and again. And if it's not the Lord, you burn out pretty quick. We were at a church once where they had, I was over the ushering ministry.

[28 : 58] And the pastor wanted in the worst way that the ushering ministry, the men, like, you know, who the greeters, handed out bulletins, passed the plate, he wanted in the worst way that they were new people.

He's like, This is a great way to get men involved. But most new people, especially guys, to a church, aren't going to want to be visible right away.

It's very hard to get people to do that. But there's expectations upon me that I would do that. Then I put expectations upon others and it never failed.

Sunday morning would come and, Oh yeah, I'm sorry, I can't make it. And I'd fall back on two or three guys who were there because God called them to it. That's what they loved doing. But there's always that pressure because I knew the pastor expected something else.

And many times we just have to let go of our expectations for ourselves and others. But man's expectations will always lead to being bound, always lead to bondage. How do we know that? Because Proverbs 29.5 says, The fear of man brings a snare, but those who put their trust in the

Lord shall be safe.

[30 : 08] And so we see with Peter, he was bound. There is a snare. Was Peter afraid of men? No. No, he wasn't. But obviously someone was afraid of Herod because they went along with his stupid idea to kill James and to put Peter in prison.

Guess where all of the benevolence in Jerusalem was coming from? You think the Sanhedrin was out there caring for the poor? No, they weren't. It came from the Christians and they're the ones being persecuted.

And so that word expectation, Peter says, God delivered me from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And there again, we see deliverance. Deliverance from the fear of man.

Deliverance just to live before the Lord without worrying about other people's expectations. So Peter's come out of prison. We move through that scene where Herod thinks he's got him.

Right now, Herod still thinks he's got him. Herod's sleeping, thinking that tomorrow, oh, this is going to be, this is going to be the best move in my political career. This will, this will get me reelected for sure. Once I put this Peter to death, the Jews will love it.

[31 : 12] But I'm going to wait till after Passover because I don't want any riots. I remember what happened with this Jesus guy. In verse 12, so then when Peter had considered the thing, he's standing there in the street with his coat around him in the middle of the night thinking, I wonder what I should do now.

Should I go into hiding? What do I do? He came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many people gathered together for prayer.

And so Peter is being drawn back to fellowship. He's like, God just delivered me. I'm so excited. I'm going to start a podcast. This is going to be great. Oh man. Now he's like, I just, I just want to get back to the family.

I just want to get back to fellowship. And I think that's the same for us. God does amazing works in our life. And it's not like you want to go into isolation. Yes, you want to tell someone like, this is so exciting, but it's not out of pride.

It's not because look what God did for me. It's because man, God is so amazing, isn't he? I mean, he brought deliverance, which really sweet is when Peter gets back to this place of fellowship, he's going to find out we were the method of my deliverance.

[32 : 16] Imagine if he never went back to fellowship. He would never found that out. The people praying would have never found out about their answered prayer either. So much we miss when we're not in fellowship.

So Peter comes to his senses or he considers the thing and he comes to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, the same one who writes the gospel of Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

And so here we see, what are they praying? They're praying for his deliverance, but he's delivered. Why do they need to keep praying? Why didn't the angel come and say, hey church, it's enough now.

He's delivered. Because deliverance is not just the end goal. So they prayed through deliverance and into fellowship, right? There's people in our lives we pray for.

There's people who don't know the Lord. There's family members. There's brothers and sisters in Christ who, as scripture says, they walk disorderly. There's those we pray for. We pray for their deliverance.

[33 : 15] There's those that are sick. There's those that are oppressed. Do we continue to pray once they're delivered? Do we pray them back into fellowship? Do we pray them into a healthy place in the body? Or is it just, oh, you're healed?

That's wonderful. That's all he's looking for. You're delivered. But here we see that the church continues to pray until Peter is back in this place, a fellowship. It wasn't enough that he's out of prison.

It wasn't enough that he was set free. They're continuing to pray until God brings Peter back to this place where they're in fellowship. We all know this verse.

Hebrews 10, 25, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another so much the more as you see the day approaching. So the idea there is there's no exhortation if there's no fellowship.

You can't get exhorted online like you can in fellowship. Not that those aren't healthy or have their place.

[34 : 18] It's just you can't exclude one to only focus on the other. And so then Peter comes and knocks on the door of the gate and a damsel came to hearken named Rhoda or her name means Rose.

And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, praise God.

He answered our prayers. I knew he would. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And they said unto her, thou art mad. Man, what a thing to say to this poor girl.

Guys, Peter's out there. You are crazy. You're mad. You're just mad. You're nuts. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, okay, it's his angel.

Like, has this ever even happened? I don't see it anywhere in the Bible where that's happened. But now they're going to start this whole other doctrine here, this whole other theology that like, well, somehow his spirit is still walking the earth and has come back to us.

[35 : 22] That's not happened. Why did they just accept that God answered prayer? So we see here, prayer's unexpected results. And it's just, it's blowing their mind that God actually answered their prayer.

But scripture said that we have been marked there that if we pray and believe, then we have what we receive. Well, it also seems like if we pray and don't believe, that God will answer prayer still. So how much more, if we pray in faith, will God do? Because look at these times where they pray in unbelief. But they were there, right? They were praying.

They actually showed up. And God looks at that and goes, ooh, there's a seed in there. There's a mustard seed. Ooh, wait till Peter shows up. Their faith is going to go boom.

And they're not going to doubt again. And Peter continued knocking. Peter wasn't like, peace out, y'all. Y'all are nuts. I'm going somewhere else. No, he was going to be back with the family.

[36 : 18] He desired fellowship. And when they had opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. But he beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

That's one of those cool little phrases that I don't know what it means, why it's in there, except to show that there's this firsthand account that people are really there. Could have just said, and Peter declared unto them. But Luke writes, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace.

So it's like we have a little insight into Peter. You know, he seems like kind of a passionate fellow anyway. So he must have been a hand talker. Quiet, everybody. You know, listen up. Listen to me. John Mark was there. John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. John Mark is going to eventually go with Paul and Barnabas so he would have known Luke. I can just imagine Luke being like, what was that like when Peter, remember that time Peter got out of prison?

Tell me about that. What was it like? Well, when they came to the house, we thought the girl was mad. And then someone suggested like it was his spirit walking around. It wasn't me. It wasn't my mother. It was somebody else. Someone suggested that.

[37 : 29] And then Peter came in and everyone was so excited and he was just waving his hands and someone thought someone thought maybe he had a sword and they were going to get their ears cut off so we just were quiet. Last time he waved his hands. Anyway, I don't know.

It's just one of those things that just caught my attention where it's like, that's so cool. The Bible just puts that there. Peter beckoning with his hand to hold their peace. He declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. I thought the angel brought him out of prison.

Now he recognizes the hand of the Lord. And he said, go show these things unto James and to the brethren. And he departed and went into another place. So we see that the result of prayer is deliverance.

It's deliverance. As the church prayed, what happened to Peter? Peter woke up. Prayer wakes people up. He was unbound. The chains fell off.

When we pray, prayer brings freedom. Deliverance. It removes chains. He was clothed. He said, hey, put your garment on you. You're not going to go out in the altogether.

[38 : 30] Put your garment on. And when we pray, it clothes people. We are to be clothed with Christ. We can be part of that process in other people's lives.

Peter was set free, not just unbound, but released, set free from the presence of the prison. He became spiritually attuned. Up there when it says, Peter was come to himself and said, now I know of a surety it's the Lord.

It opened his eyes spiritually. And then lastly, prayer restored him to fellowship, which I think is a big one. A big one. Fellowship will keep a person who's been delivered from going back into that bondage.

Fellowship will keep you awake, keep you unbound, keep you clothed, keep you free, keep you spiritually attuned when you're with the body. Because we make up so many gaps in each other's lives. So many things I can't see about myself or my direction.

You know, a brother can go, whoa, oh, did you see where you're going? No, I was looking over there. They can do that for us. And so prayer did that here as we saw with Peter.

[39 : 39] Now as we move into this next section, he tells them and said, all right, the Lord delivered me. I see it was the Lord. Go show these things unto James and to the brethren.

Here we see, again, this idea of James, Jesus' brother. Not that James was just put to death, but his brother who has this place of authority in leading the church. And to the brethren, what would the brethren be?

The rest of the apostles. You know, this must have, it's neat he goes to this house of John Mark's, mom's house, to John Mark's house. It must have just been the, you know, this was the local place he went to. This was his home church.

These were his people. And he departed and went into another place. He didn't hang around there just in case Herod was going to come snooping. Now, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers.

What was become of Peter? So they were not sleeping. The soldiers, if they were found asleep, they would have been put to death. They were awake the whole time. The guys chained to Peter were awake. The quadrupled set of four soldiers were awake.

[40 : 44] Imagine, all night, you think Peter's there and he's not. It's just wild. Then morning comes, it gets light enough that you can kind of see and you realize there's nobody here.

You look over your body and you're like, what happened? I don't know. What happened? And unfortunately for these guys, when Herod sought for him and found him, found him not, he examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death.

And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and their abode. And so a man of the people is always fickle and dangerous. And here we saw back here, Herod, he had his moment.

This was for the people. They loved it. He put James to death. Well, we'll put Peter to death too. Well, it didn't turn out how he wants. Chops off a couple heads and goes back to where he's comfortable.

Get away from these Jews. I'm going back to Caesarea. And there he abode. And Herod was mightily displeased or highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon.

[41 : 43] But they came with one accord to him and having made Blastus, poor guy, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desiring peace because their country was nourished by the king's country.

And so they come and they find what is essentially an intercessor. So I'm going to stand between them and Herod. And we won't look at them but some scriptures, Isaiah 59, 16, and 17 talk about how the Lord could not find an intercessor.

So he took up salvation for himself. And then how we, in Hebrews 10, 19, how we have assurance because of our intercessor to enter into the veil.

And so these men, they find an intercessor because their country was nourished by the king's country. So is our country, nourished by the king's country. But without our intercessor, we can't partake of that. And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration unto the people.

So he purposely planned to magnify self is what he's doing here. Josephus tells us that at this time in Caesarea, there was a festival going on like three days long.

[42 : 51] And Herod, I think on the third day, he dressed in a robe entirely made of silver. And he rode into the amphitheater in the morning. The sun hit it and it shone and it was just like blinding.

And the people began to yell out and say, oh, we thought you were a man but you're a deity. You know, bless us. And he received that worship and accepted it. And then right away in his stomach, he says that he began to have pain.

And actually, Josephus said that he cried out and said, you know, truly because I have not given providence its due or whatever then providence has done this to me.

There's almost this idea he's recognizing what's happening to him. And I think it's God's mercy because it says that immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost.

That's not really nice but we're told by Josephus that it lasted like five to seven days. That's God's mercy. Some people at the end of their life have it really, really hard, really hard.

[43 : 56] Their death is hard and long and drawn out. That's God's mercy. I was thinking about that the other day. I don't remember what it's in context of but just thinking of people who say like someone who's suffering like will put them out of their misery but you're not putting them out of their misery.

You're sending them to misery. That may be their salvation right at the end that they're going through that God is awakening them that they need salvation. And so this is God's mercy on Herod. But we see that flattery is fatal, isn't it? Proverbs 29.5 says a man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. And so these people in their flattery, Herod now has his feet cut out from under him.

Psalms 12.1-3 Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases. For the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity everyone with his neighbor. With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks proud things. And then lastly, Paul tells us in Romans 16, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them.

[45 : 13] For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Very easy to come across as a friend with words but their heart is not in it.

And then lastly, verse 24, the word of God grew and multiplied. So we see that the word continued to bring deliverance and that the word of God is not bound.

2 Timothy 2.9 Paul says, wherein I suffer trouble as an evildoer even unto bonds they bind me but the word of God is not bound. The word of God is not bound and the word of God will always unbind.

In the last verse and I thought this was really cool I hadn't seen this before. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. What? That's right. They're in Jerusalem, aren't they? They'd come down from Antioch to bring this gift.

Guess who may have been there praying for Peter's release? Who then take John Mark with them. It's like, wow, the way this is weaved together. They returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and took with them John whose surname was Mark.

[46 : 24] Don't you think Saul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem and they find out James has just been put to death. They can't believe it and they took Peter. You know, they're going to be at that prayer meeting. And I said, the house of John Mark and then they take him and take him with them.

I thought that was pretty neat the way that's just tagged on the end there. But God's desire for us is deliverance. Deliverance. As we saw in this chapter, it comes through prayer but not just deliverance.

Right? Deliverance to an end. He desires more than that. That we would walk in fellowship with him and with each other so that deliverance continues to like replicate itself over and over and that we can stay awake, stay unbound, stay clothed, stay set free, and stay spiritually attuned and through prayer, through fellowship, and through the word the Lord does that.

Father, thank you so much for setting us free. Thank you for our intercessor so that we may freely receive benefit of the king's country.

Thank you for opening our eyes to what's happening around us, Lord. Lord, if only we'd realize the power that's in prayer. Not to move you, you're already moving, you're always willing to move, but Lord, if we would recognize all we need to do is turn to you in prayer the things that you would do and are willing to do and want to do through us and through the people we fellowship with.

[47 : 53] Lord, I pray that in this fellowship that we would always be those with open eyes, Lord, that we'd be unbound, that we'd be willing, Lord, to intercede for one another, not just until deliverance, but Lord, until we see that place of healthy fellowship with you and with one another, Lord.

As your word says, if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, Lord. Let us not be content to stop short of all that you have for us. Thank you, Lord, that what man intends you prevent and that no man can prevent, Lord, what you intend.
We thank you for us. You intend good and great things in these days ahead. We love you and praise you. And in Jesus' name, Amen.