

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, February 16, 2014

SERMONS 2014

Message: Your Prayers Have Been Answered

Scripture: Acts 12:1-19

- I. One of the distinguishing factors of the Christian faith is that the God of the Bible is intimately aware and involved in the affairs of mankind.
 - a. In last week's message, we were reminded that believers are invited to come to God with boldness and shameless audacity
 - b. *HEBREWS 4:16* **Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**
 - c. While God may provide a different method of deliverance for each need, we can have confidence that we will always receive mercy and find grace from God.
 - d. 1 Peter 5:7 says that we should cast "all [our] anxieties on Him, because He cares for [us]."
 - e. After we cast our anxiety on God, we must also recognize that He is able to do what He promises to do on our behalf.
- II. How was God involved in the events of Peter's imprisonment? (Acts 12)
 - a. King Herod was arresting those who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. James was included in this group and King Herod put him to death with the sword.
 - b. Soon after this, King Herod had Peter arrested and intended to kill him for spreading the Gospel.
 - c. The Book of Acts reminds us that the Apostles were delighted to serve God and even sacrifice their very lives for their faith. In ACTS 5:41 it records, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."
 - d. After arresting Peter, sixteen soldiers, four for each watch, kept guard over the apostle, with two soldiers chained to him and two watching the doors.
 - i. Even under heavy guard, Peter knew that God was able to deliver Him from the hands of King Herod.
 - ii. While Peter was physically imprisoned his heart was preparing for God's deliverance.
- III. How should we prepare ourselves to walk in answered prayer?
- IV. **1 – We must continually pray in earnest**
 - a. *⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*
 - a. Praying in earnest means that we pray with deep sincerity and conviction no matter the depth of the situation that we or someone else is facing. By faith, we trust that God is at work while we are praying. Even though we may not see immediate change, we still believe that God is working. "And His ears are open unto their prayers" (1 Peter 3:12).
 - b. *⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.*
 - i. Praying in earnest is different from anxious thoughts. As Peter prayed for himself, he was able to sleep while in the midst of a threatening situation. Praying in earnest brings about peace.

V. 2 – While praying, we must take time to see what God is doing around us

⁸ Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.”

- a. As God brings about answers to our prayers, we can sometimes feel like Peter felt: He had no idea whether what was going on was really happening to him. The simple act of stepping away from our situations and observing what God is doing around us allows us to “come to ourselves.” We understand that what God is doing is really happening.

¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

¹⁵ “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

- a. While we are praying, we have to examine what we believe about the God that we are praying to. *⁶But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.* (James 1:6 NLT) Biblical prayer trusts in God’s ability to go above and beyond all that we can ask, imagine or think. Our faith is rooted in the character of the GOD of the outcome!
- b. Also, we must be sensitive to what God is doing around us as we pray. God works in a variety of ways and we can easily miss out on what God is doing because we are too locked into what we believe is God’s method of deliverance.
- c. While the church was earnestly praying, they didn’t have the faith to believe that God could bring about Peter’s deliverance in such a quick and tangible way.

VI. 3 – We must take time to open the doors that God has unlocked and step through it!

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the brothers about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

- a. Sometimes, we condition ourselves to hope for the least viable outcome to our prayers. We protect ourselves from disappointment by diminishing what we think God can or is willing to do.
- b. The three Hebrew boys demonstrated what bold faith looks like: *¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. ¹⁸But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”* (Daniel 3:16-18)
- c. Peter’s job was to continue knocking on the door of the church. The job of the church and specifically, Rhoda, was to open the door that God had unlocked.
- d. Rhoda heard the knocking at the door but she was so overjoyed that she forgot to actually let Peter in the house. God has afforded us many blessings that will remain dormant if we neglect to open the doors that God has unlocked and step through them.

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Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, February 16, 2014

SERMONS 2014

Message: Your Prayers Have Been Answered

Scripture: Acts 12:1-19

- 1) Has God ever shocked you in the way or timing that He answered a prayer request? Share with the group your request and how God answered it.
- 2) What was most impactful to you during this week's message?
- 3) If God answered all of your prayer requests right now, would you be ready to step into them or would it change what you prayed for?
- 4) Give an example in which you've prayed for something in earnest. Did you have peace as you continued to pray for your request?
- 5) What does it mean to be sensitive to what God is doing around us? **Read** 1 Kings 19:11-13. How did God change Elijah's sensitivity to what was going on around him. Take a moment to discuss what God is doing around your life group. Share what you believe is possible for your life group.
- 6) Pastor Joseph said, "God has afforded us many blessings that will remain dormant if we neglect to open the doors that God has unlocked and step through them." Do you have any Rhodas in your life that have been telling you that what you are praying for has been answered by God? Are there any areas of your life that have dormant blessings because you haven't stepped through the doors that God has unlocked?