

## **SERMON: WHEN IT'S BEYOND YOUR CONTROL**

### **Acts 12:5**

**Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.**

### **Introduction**

Have you ever had some predicaments that left you with the feeling that your hands were tied with a knot so strong that even Houdini could not loosen it? Have you ever had the feeling that no matter what you did, it would not make a difference? Many of us would say, "I feel that way right now!" Others would say, "The answer is a big "yes" with a capital Y." A lot of it has to do with Covid19 and its latest variant. Even the everyday things, that we did not give a second thought, now are perplexing. Should I go to the beauty shop? Should I get a haircut? Should I attend in-person worship service? Should I wait a little while longer before I take clothes to the cleaners? Should I reschedule a routine dental appointment? Deciding whether or not to eat out has become a subject of serious consideration. Before the pandemic-or should I say the plague- we thought nothing about going to a gospel concert, a movie, or a ball game. Now, all of that has changed. Every activity or chore has to be analyzed in a health-related way. We ask ourselves, "What more can I do to fix things?" After much thought, we draw a blank. That makes us feel helpless, frustrated, and temporarily hopeless.

This feeling is not new. In our text, the early church was navigating through treacherously turbulent times. Their backs were against the wall. Herod had decided to make political scapegoats of the Christians, in order to increase his standing with his political constituents. James had been executed, and when Herod discovered that the slaying of James pleased the people, he decided to kill Peter also. Peter was in jail and was scheduled to be executed the next morning. The situation was beyond their control, but it was not beyond God's control. So the church came together and lifted up prayers on Peter's behalf. Let's look at this story, episode by episode, and gain insights that will help us deal with our own problematic predicaments.

### **Exposition**

#### **1. Problem of Lethal Proportions.**

(Peter Was In Jail.)

(They Were Waiting For The Passover To Conclude To Execute Him.)

#### **2. Perpetual Prayers of Corporate Intercession.**

(The Church Was Praying At Sister Mary's House.)

(There Is Strength In Numbers.)

### **3. Peaceful Sleep of a Man of Faith.**

(Peter Was Asleep in Jail, Awaiting Execution.)

(Peter Had The Peace That Surpasses All Understanding.)

### **4. Providential Attention From On High.**

(God Was Listening To Their Prayers.)

### **5. Powerful Awakening by An Angel Of The Lord.**

(The Angel Touched Peter With a Finger Of Love.)

### **6. Piercing Of Prison Chains.**

(God Frees Us “In It” Before He Frees Us “From It.”)

(The Chains Were Broken Before He Was Delivered From The Prison.)

(There Are Chains And Bars.)

### **7. Powerful, Pleasant, Surprising Interruption.**

(Peter Was Knocking On The Door While They Were Still Praying.)

(Initially, They Did Not Believe It Was Peter.)

(No Matter How Strong Your Faith, God Will Still Amaze You.)

### **Closing Thoughts**

I will close by quoting the first verse of the hymn, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. As the hymn lyrics progress, it quickly becomes apparent that one of the reasons He is such a great friend is because He hears and answers prayer. Let’s continue to be a praying church. You’ve heard it before: “No prayer, no power; little prayer, little power; much prayer, much power!”

“What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!”

### **Related Scriptures**

**Acts 12:1-16**

**End Note:**

1. They assembled in the home of Mary, the aunt of Barnabas, the mother of John Mark. Some Bible scholars-not all of them- believe this was the site of the Upper Room where the Last Supper was held. They speculate that this site had become the holy headquarters of the fledgling church, because it allowed them to assemble in an atmosphere replete with reminders of what God has already done for them.

2. There is a Black prayer tradition. These lines were familiar to all “church goers.” They came straight from Bible stories. One of these lines refers to the angel who woke up Peter as he slept in jail. There were several variations. Here is the version I remember from the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Abbeville, Alabama.

“Thank you Lord! Early this morning, you dispatched your darling angel of mercy, who touched me with his finger love. His gentle touch woke me up as I slumbered and slept. I woke up to a new day. It was a day I had never seen before. I looked around and my bed was not my cooling board and my blanket was not my winding sheet. I come here today “knee-bent” and “body-bowed” to give you some sincere and humble thanks! O Lord, hear my humble prayer.”

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