

FALL QUARTER SUNDAY SCHOOL 2015

THEME: ACTS – EXPOSING GOD’S CHURCH COMMUNITY IN ACTION!

UNIT ONE – “The Gains of their Actions”

UNIT TWO – “The Pains of their Actions”

UNIT THREE – “The Fame of their Actions”

“POSITIVE PROOF THAT PRAYER STILL WORKS”



Sunday School Lesson No. IX - November 1, 2015

Rev. Frank A. Davis, III - Pastor-Teacher

Lesson Text: Acts 12:1-11

Required Reading: Acts 12:1-24

Memory Text: Acts 12:5, *“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”*

Reliable Resources: Union Gospel Press Expositor and Illuminator; Libronix Electronic Library; Precepts for Living (UMI), Word Search 9 and 10 Electronic Library; MacArthur Study Bible; Thirty Amazing People in the Bible by Dr. David Jeremiah; The Book of Acts by E. Gillentine; The Book of Acts in 24 Lessons by E. L. Bynum; George Brooks Preaching Commentary

INTRODUCTION

“What do you do when you are in trouble? Most likely you pray, as most of us do. When facing illness, problems, or uncertainty, believers naturally turn to God in prayer.

Yet prayer should not be considered a last resort, which seems to be the attitude of many. In fact, prayer should be our first option when facing any difficulty or decision. Even so, we often find ourselves praying with greater intensity when facing some circumstance beyond our immediate control. Such was the situation faced by the Jerusalem church when their preeminent leader, Simon Peter, was arrested and about to be executed by King Herod.

Interestingly, those praying for Peter were quite surprised when their prayers were answered with his release. Are you ever amazed at how quickly God answers some prayers? But being met by God’s silence may cause us to doubt He is listening. Even so, we should never give up.

Let us focus our attention on the present crisis in which our Lord assures us of His **“Positive Proof that Prayer Still Works.”**

Anticipated Power Points:

- **Fiendish Actions of a Demented King.** Acts 12:1-4
- **Faithful Activity of God’s Dedicated Saints.** Acts 12:5
- **Full Assurance of God’s Deliverance.** Acts 12:6-11

LESSON OUTLINE

I. Fiendish Actions of a Demented King. Acts 12:1-4

As previously mentioned, a time of fiendish persecution had risen from the throne of Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, who was king at the time of Jesus' birth. This family of demented leaders were truly the workers of the Devil. According to Dr. John MacArthur: "Agrippa the I ran up numerous debts in Rome and fled to Palestine. Imprisoned by Emperor Tiberius after some careless comments, he eventually was released following Tiberius' death, and was made ruler of northern Palestine, to which Judah and Samaria were added in A. D. 41. As a hedge against his shaky relationship with Rome, he curried favor with the Jews by persecuting Christians."

Our present text indicates that James the brother of John was executed by this king and when he saw how it pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter, planning to put him on trial and have him executed as well. Jesus had taught the disciples that they would surely face persecution as noted in Matthew 5:11-12, "***Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.***" And in Matthew 24:9 we find, "***Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.***"

Note that when Peter was arrested, he was bound and guarded by 16 soldiers (4 quaternions), and placed in the darkest dungeon of the prison. Beloved, it appeared that Herod was securing Peter from the eyes of God. But David wrote some super-assuring words concerning the security of God's Saints in Psalm 139:7-12 (read).

II. Faithful Activity of God's Dedicated Saints. Acts 12:5

What is one of the most faithful activities a Christian can do? Here, it is about Prayer! "When in doubt, pray; when we feel helpless, pray; when we need God's intervention, pray!" In fact, the Bible is explicit to declare the power of prayer: Psalm 55:17, "***Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.***"

Philippians 4:6, "***Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.***"

I Thessalonians 5:17, "***Pray without ceasing.***"

The church labored in prayer at the house of John Mark's mother while Peter rested in the arms of the Lord, sleeping and trusting this life in the hands of the Lord! No doubt Peter remembered the words of David, "***...He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...***"

III. Full Assurance of God's Deliverance. Acts 12:6-11

Beloved, do you have that blessed assurance that rested in Peter's heart? Peter took off his day clothes and slept in his night clothes. No doubt he prayed to the Lord that His will be done and he waited on the Lord. Beloved, "***...they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.***" Nothing is more encouraging than to see a believer at peace. Peter was in prison, chained and bound, but not worried or afraid!

God sent an angel who loosed him, led him, and left him safe and sound, all while Peter rested in the peace and protection of the Lord. To him, it was as if he was living in a dream. No wonder Isaiah the prophet assures us as the saints of God in 26:3, "***Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.***"

"*Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pains we bear, All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer!*"

CLOSING

I close by declaring that there is nothing too hard for the Lord! We who are His workmanship must abide in His will and trust Him with all of our hearts.

Peter's peril turned to praise in this week's lesson. He who once denied the Christ and was restored by the Christ, learned to rest in the Christ.

The Church's prayers were heard and answered affirmatively. To God be the glory, no matter what the answer may be. As Christians, we are to do one thing... "***Trust and Obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.***" And why, beloved? We have Positive Proof that Prayer Still Works.

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Looking Ahead:

November 8, 2015

Acts 15:1-12

The Sunday School Lesson is taught each Wednesday at noon at Bibleway. All are welcome!

