

Prayer and Fasting

Text: Acts 12

Acts 12:5

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

* There was God's pattern for deliverance.

Note a significant point:

* God's providence saved Peter but not James. Why?

* Very simply, it was time for James to join his Lord and receive the fruit of his labor for work done here on earth.

* Peter's work was not yet done.

Believers must always remember, the day when they are to go to their Lord does come

God's pattern for delivering believers through or from persecution is fourfold.

1. There is the pattern of prayer

Church-wide prayer delivered Peter (Acts 12:5).

Note three points.

a. The whole church was praying.

b. The church was doing all it could do, praying specifically for Peter's deliverance.

c. The words "without ceasing" mean fervently and earnestly continuing in prayer.

The idea is intense prayer, prayer that captivates and focuses a person's concentration.

The root meaning of the word is "to stretch out." The picture is that the church was stretched out, prostrate before God, earnestly and fervently crying out to Him for God's sovereign deliverance of Peter. The church could do nothing and they knew it. Peter's only hope was God.

2.

God's pattern for delivering believers through or from persecution is:

2. There is the pattern of confidence.

Confidence in God's will and care delivered Peter

Acts 12:6

“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”

Note that Peter was asleep, and it was the very night before his execution. Christ was meeting His dear servant's need, infusing him with His very special grace and peace.

Peter sensed the very special trust and care of his Lord.

God Fact: The Lord infuses His strength, peace, care, understanding, and marvelous grace to go through whatever trial confronts His dear servant.

"There hath no temptation [trial] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"

1 Corinthians 10:13

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever"

2 Timothy 4:18

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"

2 Peter 2:9

2.

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"

Psalm 31:19

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength"

Isaiah 26:3-4

3. There is the pattern of God's miraculous work and the believer's obedience.

Both were involved in delivering Peter

Acts 12:7-10 (YLT) [Note the Scripture and outline]

“7 and lo, a messenger of the Lord stood by, and a light shone in the buildings, and having smitten Peter on the side, he raised him up, saying, `Rise in haste,’ and his chains fell from off his hands.

8 The messenger also said to him, `Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals;’ and he did so; and he saith to him, `Put thy garment round and be following me;’

9 and having gone forth, he was following him, and he knew not that it is true that which is done through the messenger, and was thinking he saw a vision,

10 and having passed through a first ward, and a second, they came unto the iron gate that is leading to the city, which of its own accord did open to them, and having gone forth, they went on through one street, and immediately the messenger departed from him.

a. The angel did not do for Peter what Peter could do for himself.

simply: Peter had to act; he had to obey the commands of the angel.

b. Once Peter was safely delivered out of danger, he was left on his own, left to work out his own deliverance.

He was to continue his "walk by faith"...

- to return to the church and to the believers on his own.
- to seek the Lord about remaining or leaving Jerusalem and in making any other decisions that needed to be made.

4.

The point is this:

* God's miraculous deliverance involved only what Peter could not do for himself.

* When Peter was helpless, God then took over.

This is the point of miracles. Miracles are acts of God, acts that men cannot do for themselves. They are worked by God and by Him alone; therefore, He and He alone gets the praise and honor.

4. There is the pattern of God's sovereign will

Acts 12:12 (YLT)

“12 also, having considered, he came unto the house of Mary, the mother of John, who is surnamed Mark, where there were many thronged together and praying”

It was God's sovereign will for Peter to be delivered.

It was not His will for James to be delivered.

The true believer rests in God's sovereign will, knowing that God's will results in the greatest blessings.