

Book of Acts Series - Part 14 | Why We Pray

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the power of prayer in breaking chains, overcoming human elements, waking up sleeping people, and opening doors, highlighting the importance of faith and trust in God's power and strength.

Duration: 14:57

Scripture: Acts 12:5

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story from the early church about the power of prayer. He recounts the miraculous escape of Peter from prison, where he was chained and guarded by soldiers. The preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer as a link between believers and God, highlighting how the church fervently prayed for Peter's release. He also encourages the congregation to have faith and passion in their prayers, believing that God can break chains, open doors, and rescue people from hopeless situations.

Transcript

Acts 12. It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, the early church, intending to persecute them. He had James the brother of John, that's the John who wrote 1st and 2nd, 3rd John, and the Gospel of John, the young disciple who laid his head on Jesus' breast.

He had James the brother of John put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread around the time of Passover.

After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each, 16 in total. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. So, Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

That earnestly praying to God for him doesn't capture what the Greek language really says there. What it's saying is that they basically shut down everything in a state of emergency and a steady stream of prayer went up because it looked like they were going to lose Peter, guarded by four people at a time, chained in a prison, no money to get him out. Just think how hopeless and helpless they felt.

And we go on. That night, the night before Herod was to bring him to trial, which was going to be a mock trial. They were going to kill him.

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. He had chains, he had two soldiers around him, and he had sentries guarding the door. So, he's locked up tight.

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 of Peter's wrists. 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. Peter followed him out of the prison, but had no idea what the angel was doing was really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision.

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. And when they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen. So this is a story from the early church about the amazing power that prayer has because prayer is what links you up and links me up and links the church up with Almighty God. God has never lost His power.

Are you with me on that? There is across the church in America, sometimes in other places in the world, an anti-supernatural current that God can't do what He used to do. And thus there's no prayer meetings. People don't pray much alone.

They don't pray in services. They don't have a night devoted to prayer because what's the sense? But the Bible tells us that this was the only tool the early church had because it had no money, no political power, no buildings, no New Testament to hand out to anyone, no keyboards, no microphones, no carpet, no seats, nada, nothing. But the Lord said when you get into trouble, remember, call upon Me and I will answer you.

I will answer you when you call upon Me. So now Peter is going to lose his life it seems. And the church gets hit with some burden of not only concern but faith.

You've got to have concern and faith. You've got to have passion but you've got to have belief because without faith it's impossible to please God. I want you to notice also here in this little picture that Luke takes time to paint this picture.

He was not present when this happened. He had not been converted yet to Christianity but he researched it. And Luke the doctor, the only Gentile writer of any book in the New Testament, we find out that as he researched it he paints this picture of a church calling on God and Peter over here in a prison sleeping locked up with chains guards around him, sentries.

There's no hope. But the church doesn't know that because God said don't look at what you see, look at what I can do. So the church is pouring itself out in prayer and a lot of people who feel with unbelief

including pastors would say, look, you've just got to accept the way life rolls sometimes.

That's the way it rolls. You've just got to go with it. But when God puts faith in your heart and God puts that fight in your spirit, you've got to obey it.

How many say amen? And you've got to call on God and pray for that person who, or for yourself, that person who's locked up and seemingly hopeless. So now a steady stream of prayer is going up. I wonder what happened to churches around America if just for some churches, just for one week they closed down their normal schedules and in every service they had they just led a prayer meeting.

What would happen in a month? What would happen? Well some people say, well then the people won't come back, the regular folks who go to church, they don't want to come to prayer meetings. Well then what kind of people do you have coming to your church? Imagine if you were told the early Christians, don't come, it's only a prayer meeting. No, that was where the action was.

That's where the power is. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. So now notice what happens.

They're praying. And this is given us in detail, not just because it happened historically, but it shows the power of God in response to prayer. Number one, the chains fell off.

His chains fell off. God broke the chains. As they prayed, God answered by breaking chains.

Did you know God still is breaking chains? God is still breaking chains. Do you know someone? Or maybe you have chains of depression, of whatever, just holding you down. I'm not against any other form of therapy that's legitimate, but I'm saying I gotta go by the Bible.

I'm a minister. I'm a Christian. I believe in God's Word.

God breaks chains. God can do what no doctor can do. Come on, do you believe that? God can do what nobody else can do.

I know this sounds so elementary and simple to you, and you say, we've heard this before from you, but I don't care. This is how simple prayer is. Prayer is not complicated.

It's simple, but it's powerful. We don't understand how it works, but I don't understand how electricity works, but I still plug something in, and I watch it work. I don't understand what's going on there, and that's the way prayer is.

We don't understand how it totally works. Sovereignty of God, free will of man. God says you have not because you ask not, yet God is on a throne ruling over the universe.

I don't know how that all works. I just know God says pray. Pray, and I'll answer.

So you have a loved one maybe tonight, someone you're witnessing to. Their chains need to be broken. Maybe it's the chains in their mind.

God in answer to prayer can break any chain that any demon or anything else can make. Come on. Let's say amen to that.

God can break that chain. I don't know how He does it, but He can break it. Number two.

By the way, did you notice that He overcame? We don't know what happened to them. Were they knocked unconscious? Whatever. But the human people that were blocking Peter were suddenly overcome by God.

God can overcome people that are holding the one you're praying for back. Someone says no, but that person's in their life, and they've got a hold on them, and they're practicing voodoo on them, or they're doing this or that. Who cares? God is stronger than anybody that's trying to hold somebody back.

We've got to believe that. Come on. We've got to believe that.

He breaks chains. He overcomes the human element. Notice just two more things real quick.

The angel woke up Peter. Slapped him and woke him up. And that's a beautiful picture of something that has happened over the centuries.

When you pray for people in faith, God can wake them up, not from physical sleep, but from spiritual sleep. Don't we have loved ones that are sleeping? Don't we know people that maybe even used to go to this church or whatever? They're sleeping. They are asleep.

They're sleeping. When you talk to them, you can't even get through. They're sleeping.

The enemy has put them to sleep. He's lulled them to sleep. God, in answer to prayer, can wake them up.

My daughter, my oldest girl, was sleeping. Spiritually sleeping. Comatose.

God woke her up in answer to prayer. God woke her up. He literally woke her up at night with a dream, but he woke her up out of that state of delusion.

Blindness. God can wake people up. So God can break chains.

He can overcome any human element. He wakes people up. Don't you know someone who needs to be woken up? Someone who you want to just grab and say, what are you doing? Some of you young people that are here, don't you have friends? Someone's got to pray for them because they're not praying for themselves.

Lastly, for somebody here who's asking for that door to be open for whatever, ministry, job, finance, whatever. It's such a beautiful picture as they're walking out of the prison. The angel's got Peter's attention now.

They're walking out and the first two doors open and now they come to the big door. The big door that opens up into the city and now they're going to be free. And the Bible says with purpose and the door opened by itself.

See, they didn't have to get...angel, get a crowbar out of there and let's try to get this thing open. Let's get a battering ram. Haven't we all tried to open doors ourselves and it wears you out? But when God opens a door, nobody can shut it.

Come on, let's say amen one more time. God opens doors, nobody can shut. So, listen.

Listen, real quick now. God breaks any chain, any habit. I don't care what it is.

He can break it. God overcomes any human element. I don't care what...they're in a gang, they're in this.

God can overcome it. Number three, God wakes sleeping people up. Brings them out of spiritual stupor.

And lastly, He opens doors without you even struggling. He just opens. Paul is often found asking God to open doors.

He says, pray for me church that God might open a door for ministry, for the gospel. Some of us need doors open to get to that person on the job, that person. It's like they're closed, but God can open a door.

And they'll say something out of nowhere to you and you know that's an open door. This is from God. Oh, how many want to see open doors so we can talk, pray, visit, go.

Like God's opened a door in Benin. Pastor Park's taken into Benin because there's an open door. And I know he's always searching, trying to find where is there an open door.

The doors are closed one way spiritually in these areas, but then there's an open door that God says no, go. I'm going to use you. If you have a loved one close to you that you want to be Acts 12 praying for Peter person, they're in prison.

Look, they got chains on them. They got chains on them. In my times I wept on the carpet of that other building that we used to be in when my dad, alcoholic for 22 years.

You think my mother and I and others ever gave up praying? No. And then God broke the chains. You can't quit.

You can't give up. It's always too soon to quit. You got to pray until the chains are broken.

My dad lived out his life sober as a judge. And more sober than some judges. I just was thinking of things I read in the paper.

Sober like a saint. Chains are broken. Now Lord, we ask you to so anoint this pastor and leadership team from Tennessee.

Would you honor the fact that they would travel and spend this money to be in a prayer meeting in downtown Brooklyn? Will you not see the hunger God that they have? Would you not pour out a new anointing of your spirit upon their work Lord? A fresh blessing fresh wind, fresh fire indeed Lord upon them. Would you give them wisdom as they make decisions? Would you grant unity and love among the people? Would you keep their doors open to all people of all races, of all backgrounds? We pray that the gospel will run and be glorified out of that church. And we support them and we encourage them today in your presence.

Would you get us all home safely God we pray in Christ's name? Remind us how good you are so we can give you one last hallelujah or praise the Lord before we go to bed. Should we see another day? Would you give us a good Wednesday? Keep us alert, led by the spirit, producing the fruit of the spirit through us Lord. Would you help us to share Jesus and be aggressive and bold in inviting people to come to Christ to come to church.

Would you draw people in here Lord so that we can be reminded of how faithful you are? Help us to spread the word about Jesus everywhere we go. And thank you that chains are being broken Lord and

people are being woken up and doors are being opened Lord because we prayed in Jesus name because we prayed Father in Jesus name. God's going to give us a good trip home tonight okay? Everyone turn around and hug a bunch of people.

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