

Reflections Reflections from God's Word

ANSWERED PRAYER

*Now about that time Herod the king
laid hands on some who belonged to the church,
in order to mistreat them*

Acts 12:1

In Acts 12:1-19 we learn:

James, the brother of John, was put to death (v 2)

Peter was taken into custody (v 3)

The church was fervently praying for Peter (v 5)

Peter was miraculously set free (vv 6-11)

Reading these verses, a question comes to mind—had the believers also prayed for James? I would like to think so. Two Apostles, both arrested, with two very different outcomes. When Peter, comes to the home of Mary, John Mark's mother, the servant-girl, Rhoda, is astonished when Peter suddenly knocks at the door of the gate (vv 12-14). Filled with joy, she runs to tell the prayer group that Peter is outside, and their response, "You are out of your mind!" (v 15). Were they expecting Peter to meet the same fate as James? What expectations do I impose on my prayers?

From Acts 12, there are several practical observations we can take away regarding answered prayer:

God's answers can come not only at unexpected times but in unexpected ways

*An angel suddenly appeared...he (Peter) did not know that
what was being done by the angel was real,
but thought he was seeing a vision (v 8, 9).*

Answered prayer may not be immediately recognized

*When she (servant-girl) recognized Peter's voice...she ran in
and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate...
And they said to her, 'You are out of your mind!' (vv 13-15).*

Often answers to identical prayers do not always have the same outcome

*James, the brother of John, was put to death (v 2).
Peter continued knocking...they saw him
and were amazed (vv 12-16).*

Sometimes answered prayer has unforeseen consequences for others

*(Herod) examined the guards and ordered
that they be led away to execution (vv 18-19).*

It may require action on the part of the one prayed for

*The angel said to him (Peter) “Gird yourself and
put on your sandals...follow me” (vv 7-9).*

And often with the realization that God may be slow but He is never late

*And on the very night when Herod was about to bring him
(Peter) forward...an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared (v 6).*

While Peter was asleep in prison (v 6), he was truly free in the center of God's will. The believers were physically free but imprisoned by their expectation of what God could or would do. In which of the two prisons do we find ourselves?

