

“Prayer and Providence: Powerful and Perplexing”

Text: Acts 12:1-19 (Page 920 in the pew Bible)

This is a chapter about prayer.

I. The (sometimes perplexing) providence of God in how He answers prayer.

Verse 2 “He (Herod) killed James the brother of John with the sword.”

Verse 11 “(Peter said) The Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

Hebrews 11:33-34

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection.

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

II. The peace that passes understanding through prayer.

Verse 6 “Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, “

Psalm 127:2 “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.”

Psalm 4:8 “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

Philippians 4: 6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

III. The pressure from God that brings prayer.

Acts 8:1 “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Verse 5 “Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.”

IV. The power of God unleashed through the people of God together in prayer.

Verse 12 “He (Peter) went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.”