

## The Way of the Early Church, Part 7: Peter's Escape from Prison

Remember, small groups are primarily for growing closer relationships with other believers. We can learn wonderful things in this environment but keep relationships first.

- Make sure everyone knows each other's names. Have everyone share a little about themselves and how life is going right now.
- **The Way of the Early Church**
  - In this series we unlock several powerful eternal principles in order to see God do mighty things!
- **This Week: Peter's Miraculous Escape from Prison**
- The telling of this great miracle starts with a great and tragic loss. **Acts 12:1-3**
  - This is James, the brother of John! He was one of the three! Imagine that.
  - Do you think they prayed for James?
  - How do you think they felt when James was killed instead of released?
- How do Christians handle disappointment in prayer? What can you think of?
  - Pray prayers of duty but not of faith.
  - Pray mushy prayers that can't go unanswered because of their form.
  - Blame 3<sup>rd</sup> parties: the person, the prayer, God.
    - Note: When Peter escapes 16 soldier pay with their lives. Perhaps God was sparing these men by allowing James to die?? What do you think? Could that sort of thing be happening?
  - Become disillusioned and quit praying...maybe quit believing.
  - Create new theologies where God doesn't do anything anymore.
  - OR Keep praying in faith but keep learning and getting better!!
    - That takes great faith and great emotional health! Let's to that!
- Who would you rather be, James or Herod?
  - Herod, who has the power to kill for political benefit or on personal whim,
    - But who, as is inevitable, finds destruction at his end. **Acts 12:21-23**
  - James, the servant of God who remains faithful and who is martyred early on,
    - But who, as is inevitable, finds everlasting life with God at his end.
  - How unjust would it have seemed when James was killed?
    - But justice was done. What seems unjust in your life? In what ways does God bring justice?
  - We, as believers in Jesus, win when we walk by faith, remain faithful and obedient to God, and keep our love of God to the end. Not necessarily when we live longer more comfortable lives.
    - James won. Herod lost. Who would you rather be? How do you be that?
- Let's get to the sermon! **Acts 12:4-19**
  - They were praying earnestly for Peter, but they couldn't believe that he was free!
    - Amazingly they did not believe their own prayers could be answered!
    - Ever been there? Are you there now?
      - If this could happen to them, might it happen to us today?!?!??
  - What does the devil want? Lots of stuff, but...
    - One of the things he wants is to stop you from praying prayers of faith.
      - Prayers of duty without faith, mushy prayers, quitting praying altogether, etc.
  - What does our Heavenly Father want? Lots of stuff, but...
    - One of the things He wants is for you to pray prayers of faith and lots of them!!
    - This means you will have to handle disappointment properly!
      - Learn! Persevere! Keep the faith!!
  - I want you to pray a prayer of faith. What do you need to believe God for?
    - Remember your prayer. Maybe write it down. Let it build your faith.
  - I want to read a prayer of faith over you from **Ephesians 3:14-21**.
    - Believe to receive this. God wants this for you!
- Pray for each other before you finish up!