

Acts 12

Prayer and its results vs. pride and its results

v.1 Agrippa- grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus as an , was also the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had a role in the trial of Jesus ([Luke 23:7-12](#)).

v.2 **With the sword:** Normally, this means that James was beheaded. Eusebius relates a story from Clement of Alexandria, who said the soldier guarding James before the judge was so affected by his witness that he declared himself a Christian also and was also willingly executed for Jesus along side of James (Eusebius, *Church History* 2.9.2-3).

Significantly, there was no attempt to replace James, as there was to replace Judas (Acts 1). This was because James died as a faithful martyr, but Judas revealed his apostasy in betraying Jesus. There was no need for another man to take the office of James.

v.3-4 three reasons for the delay in executing Peter: (1) Herod wanted to show how scrupulously he observed the Passover; (2) he wanted to wait until the pilgrim crowds went home, fearing a riot; (3) he wanted to wait until he had the full attention of the Jewish population.

Delivered him to four squads of soldiers: Knowing Peter (with the other apostles) had mysteriously escaped from prison before ([Acts 5:17-21](#)), Herod assigned a high-security detail to guard Peter.

v.5 The word **constant** also has the idea of *earnest*; literally, the word pictures someone *stretching out all they can for something*. “The verb *ektenos* is related to *ektenes*, a medical term describing the stretching of a muscle to its limits.” (MacArthur)

Luke uses this same word *ektenos* for the agonizing prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane ([Luke 22:44](#)).

James 5:13 through James 5:16 ¹³ *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ *And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* ¹⁶ *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.***

Phil. 4:6 through Phil. 4:8 ⁶*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*
⁷*and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

⁸*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

Col. 4:2 ²*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*
..... ¹²*Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and [£]complete in all the will of God.*

We have been given incredible promises from God if we would just seek His face,
and His will in prayer.

(John 14:12-14 NKJV) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. {13} "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

(John 15:7-8 NKJV) "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. {8} "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

(John 15:16 NKJV) "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Could any words be plainer or clearer than these ? Could any promises be grander or greater ? Has anyone, anywhere, at anytime ever offered so much ?

We find these people praying but not really expecting God to work.

Their positives- they prayed together constant unceasing prayer

Hinderances to Prayer

Sin

(Isa 59:1-3 NKJV) Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. {2} But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

(Psa 66:18 NKJV) If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

Unforgiveness

(Mark 11:25-26 NKJV) "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. {26} "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

(Mat 5:23-24 NKJV) "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, {24} "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Marriage out of order

(1 Pet 3:7 NKJV) Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Doubt

(James 1:6-8 NKJV) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. {7} For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; {8} he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

(Mat 21:21-22 NKJV) So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. {22} "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

I don't think doubt hinders God from answering, it hinders us from receiving.

Self-seeking motives *(James 4:2-3 NKJV) You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. {3} You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Unthankful hearts

(1 Th 5:16-18 NKJV) Rejoice always, {17} pray without ceasing, {18} in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

(Psa 37:4-5 NKJV) Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. {5} Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

Angels

Heb. 1:14 ministering spirits for us

Heb. 13:2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing some have unwittingly entertained angels

- never in Scripture has an angel appeared to talk with wicked person
- always appeared as men, never women or children
- Satan can appear as an angel of light, as can his ministers
- Paul says that even if an angel appears, if he preaches another gospel let him be accursed
- angels warn, protect, and minister to us
- we don't call on angels but on the Lord Who sends angels
- focus in Scripture is never on the angel but on his message from the Lord
- in these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son

v.20-25 Herod in Ceasarea

- amphitheater on stage, Med sea at his back, sun shining on him reflecting all the gold in his garments made him look like a god

v. 20-23 Herod makes himself the focus, draws attention to himself, he is the center of attention.

Prov. 16:18 ¹⁸ *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Prov. 29:23 ²³ *A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.*

** Why was James killed and Peter spared? Peter should have been killed but wasn't. How many times has your life been spared?

Why are we still here? God has a plan and a purpose for you, to use you.

Close with Jeremiah 32: 17- continue with v.27 to 33:2