

Bible e-Study on the book of Acts (12 & 13)

Be Careful – Prayer is Powerful!

‘5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.’ ‘3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.’ Acts 12:5 & 13:3

NUGGET – It’s a curious thing about prayer. God really hears and responds as He sees best but we sometimes, it seems, don’t expect that. In the case where the *‘church was earnestly praying to God for him’* (Peter) what might they have been praying for? Safety, strength, courage perhaps even deliverance? And how is it reported as to what happened to Peter? After all the details are given and he is miraculously escorted out of prison he comes to the house and we’re told *‘they were astonished.’*

But why? Why be astonished? They *were* praying for him after all and now God answered their prayer and delivered him out of the hands of Herod and the Jews. I guess they are not much different than we are.

Yes, we all know, as they did, what God *can* do. Look at all what they had seen God do in the church in the years since Pentecost. (This incident of Peter’s miraculous escape most church historians put at about 10-14 years after Jesus’ ascension.) But though God *can* do miraculous things, and we fully believe that He does, we are still astonished *when* He does.

I take comfort knowing that God and His people today are not really any different than in the days of Acts. True that we tend not to see overt healings and such (*as we’ll see in 14:1-4 where it says that God used such things to attest to His word of grace proclaimed through His servants though not with uniform acceptance!*), but part of that may be because of the ways God chooses to work His miracles these days. We have people with · hip implants · artificial hearts · glasses and other wonders that God uses to give healing to His people through the work of those He has chosen to do such things. But the main point is that God *hears* the prayers of His people and *answers*.

Sometimes we’re astonished at the speed or magnitude of His response. However we are often left to wait and see the larger picture of what God does in answering the prayers of His people. Like in the case of the second prayer we referenced above where the church *‘after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off’*, speaking of Barnabas and Saul.

As the missionary journeys of Saul /Paul and others begin with prayer, we are in the humble position to see the enormous scope and vast reach of what God has done in answering those prayers. We see the growth and mission work of the church; having begun then, continue down till today. God has answered their prayers and continues to do so through us as we remain steadfast and faithful to following Him just as they did.

APPLICATION -

1. My tendency with the application of this lesson is to get you to want to ‘do’ something that corresponds to the work we see happening in the mission outreach of the early church. And while that’s not all bad, perhaps the better application is to ask us all to apply ourselves to ‘seeing’ better. That is, to be learning to see with expectation and focused vision what *God* chooses to do. And perhaps then we can be better prepared to ‘go’ when He sends us.

PRAY – With the certainty that God hears and answers (sometimes in *astounding* ways) the prayers of His people in Jesus Christ, ask God to guide your heart and mind as to the season, watching and waiting, or going and serving, He has for you in His kingdom on earth right now.