

Hello everyone, happy May!!!
Hope you all have a great week! Don't forget carry-in dinner@ 6pm and bible study@7pm wed. night

Please keep the National Trail 8th grade in your prayers as they are traveling to Washington D.C. and back this week. We are having brunch following worship next week for Mother's Day. Please try and come.

God bless you and keep you, God make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace.

Pastor Don

"The Power of Prayer Overcomes Doubts"

Acts 12: 5-17 May 5, 2013

A young boy called the pastor of the local Brethren church to ask him to come by to pray for his mother who was very ill. The pastor knew the family was members of the local Baptist church. So the pastor asked, "Shouldn't you be asking your pastor to come by to pray with your mom?" The young boy replied, "Yeah, but we didn't want to take the chance that he might catch whatever it is that she has."

Little Johnny was misbehaving & got sent to his room. After a while he emerged and informed his mother that he had thought it over & said a prayer. "Fine", said the pleased mother. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, He will help you." "Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Johnny. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Little Johnny told his daddy he'd like to have a baby brother. His dad paused for a reply "I'll tell you what, Johnny, if you pray every day for two months for a baby brother, I guarantee that God will give you one!" Johnny responded eagerly. He prayed every night for a whole month, but after that time, he began to get skeptical. He checked around the neighborhood and found out that what he thought was going to happen, had never occurred in the history of the neighborhood. You just don't pray for two months and then get a new baby brother. So, Johnny quit praying. After another month, Johnny's mother went to the hospital. When she returned home, Johnny called into his parent's bedroom. He cautiously walked in, not expecting to find anything, but there was a little bundle lying right next to his mother. His dad pulled back the blanket and there was -- not one baby brother, but two!! His mother had twins! Johnny's dad looked down at him and said, "Now aren't you glad you prayed?" Johnny hesitated a little and then looked up at his dad and said, "Yes, but aren't you glad I quit when I did?"

Skepticism robs our prayers of their power. James says in 5:16 "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much". We need to remember what Max Lucado said; "The power of prayer is not in the one who prays, but in the one who hears." Do we pray with all our heart; do we really believe God will answer our prayer; do we believe that the answer we get will be the best one for us?

Someone once said a day hemmed in prayer is less likely to unravel. Someone also said that prayer is the key to the morning and the bolt of the evening. So if we pray without faith are we just wasting our time? Do we really mean what we say in prayer or are we just going through the motions? Does God answer faithless prayer? Sometimes. He did in today's scripture. Why, because it was His will to free Peter. Do we always pray for God's will to be done? Do we rejoice when it is?

Phil. 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus."

A fervent, heartfelt, trusting prayer brings us peace of mind and comfort to our soul. Do we really trust God? The answer is found in our prayer life; do we let go and let God or do we pray and then worry about the answer? Someone once said if you're going to pray, don't worry; but if you're going to worry, don't pray. We need to pray about all things and trust God for the best answer and when we get it; we need to be thankful & not surprised.

God does not always give us the answer we are looking for. Not getting the answer we want can make us skeptical, but we must not let that happen. God always gives us the best answer. We must keep our faith in Him and remember that we walk by faith, not by sight. Do we believe that God will answer our prayer, or does doubt cloud our faith? pray

Verse 5 tells us that Peter is in prison. This means that the persecution of the church was back. Herod Agrippa I is the King Luke is referring to in Acts 12:1-3 "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand

to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also." This Herod is the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded and the grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill baby Jesus in Bethlehem. Not only is James the 1st disciple to die for the cause of Christ, he is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the bible.

Peter is in prison, chained to & guarded by 4 squads of soldiers. Peter is still alive because he was arrested just before Passover and was scheduled to be tried and executed when Passover is finished. It was against Jewish law to hold a trial or sentence someone during Passover; a law which they broke when it came to Jesus.

Luke tells us the church was praying constantly for Peter. God answered their prayers. Peter was rescued in miraculous fashion. Peter had been arrested twice before. The 1st time he and John spent the night in jail and testified before the Sanhedrin the next day. They were released and commanded not to speak to teach in the name of Jesus anymore. The second time, Peter was arrested with some unnamed other apostles. They were in jail and an angel came and opened the prison doors and brought them out. The angel told them to appear before the people in the morning at the temple and speak to them the words of life. They did and then the Sanhedrin had them beaten and released, once again commanding them to no longer speak in the name of Jesus. What would we do if we were jailed or beaten for speaking in the name of Christ? Would we continue preaching and teaching in His name if we were commanded not to?

Peter was in awe as this miraculous event happened. Verse 9 says "So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision." Peter thought he was having a dream; like the vision of the sheet back on the roof of Simon the tanners' house. In verse 11 he realizes this is not a dream but he is really free. So he goes to Mary's house. This Mary is John Mark's mother. John Mark is the author of the Gospel of Mark.

Many believers are gathered at Mary's house praying for Peter. He knocks on the door and evidently called out because it says that Rhoda, the girl who came to answer the door recognized his voice. But instead of opening the door and welcoming Peter inside, she runs back to tell the others that Peter is knocking on the door.

Her good news is met with skepticism. They tell her she is beside herself; they tell her she is crazy. What kind of faith do these people

have? They are praying for Peter to be released unharmed and he is. He is at their door yet they do not believe. Do we believe when God answers our prayers?

Meanwhile while these people are inside arguing, Peter is still outside knocking. Finally somebody opened the door and let him in. They were all astonished vs. 16 tells us. Peter gets them to quite down and begins to speak to them. He tells them of his miraculous escape and then he instructs them to go and tell James, this would be James the brother of Jesus, who is leader of the Jerusalem church, and the other believers what God had done for him. Then Peter departed and went to another place.

Peter is only mentioned once more in the book of Acts. He makes a brief appearance in chapter 15, and then Luke focuses upon Paul's minister.

Peter had quite a night didn't he? What a story to tell & a witness to bear. The believers did not believe it until they saw Peter standing there and talking to them. Do we believe in God's miracles? Do we share them with others?

What do you think the guards thought about all this? What were they doing when all this excitement went on in the jail? How could they sleep with that bright light shining and the noise of the chains falling off and the doors opening and shutting? Luke doesn't tell us what they saw, heard or felt; all he tells us about them is that in the morning there was no small stir among the soldiers. Vs.19 tells us that Herod commanded that they all be executed because their prisoner had escaped. 4 squads of 4 men each, 16 men died because of this miracle. Roman law said that if you lost your prisoner, you had to take his punishment. We would say that is not fair. Even if these men saw something they could not have stopped it. My theory is that they had to see or hear something and this miracle would have changed their lives, short as they were. Some people only get one shot at hearing the gospel; others hear it hundreds of times. That is why it is so important for us to share the gospel. Ours might be the testimony that reaches them and they will give their lives to Jesus. No one knows when they will draw their last breath; that is why today is the day of salvation because we are not promised tomorrow, only today.

Are we people of prayer? 1Thes. 5:16-18 says "Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Do we pray with out ceasing; do we seek God's will before we do anything; do we offer prayers of thanksgiving from a grateful heart; do we rejoice always, even if we are unjustly treated for the gospel's sake?

God is still on the throne and prayer changes things. One of the things prayer changes is us. God may not change our circumstances, but he will change us and the way we look at things. In 2 Cor.12, Paul asked God to change things for him by removing his thorn in the flesh. God did not; instead God answered him with these words in vs. 9 "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." God changed Paul so that he could handle the pain and suffering. He can do the same for us.

We don't always get what we pray for, but we always get what is best for us. Paul tells us in Romans 8:28 " All believers are called according to His purpose. Things don't always work out the way we want, but they are always for the best, even if we don't think so at the time. Acts 12 shows us a very good case in point; why did God allow Herod to kill James but God freed Peter? Life is filled with difficult questions like this. As mere mortals living on earth, we may never know the answers. Our faith tells us that Father knows best. He may even explain some things to us when we get to heaven. But for now, we have to trust God and faithfully follow Him. Instead of asking why we need to ask what; what are you teaching me Lord; what are you telling me to do, what is required of me. Then we need to step out on faith and do it. We need to believe that what God has called us to do; He will equip us to do. We each have a ministry and we need to support each other in prayer. Prayer works.

As we can see from Acts 12, prayer works even if we don't believe that God will answer it. Christians need to believe that God will answer prayer. We don't need to be surprised when God answers our prayers, we need to be thankful. Are we thankful?

Sam Shoemaker was a preacher in New York City during the 1st half of the 1900s. When he encountered a non believer, he challenged them to pray for 30 days that God would meet them at the point of their greatest need and see what happens. This little experiment transformed 100's of people from staunch skeptics into committed Christians.

In his book "All things are possible through prayer" Charles Allen relates this story from the Hugh Price Hughes' story "The City of Everywhere". A man arrived in the city early on a cold winter morning. As he got off the train, he noticed a strange thing; everybody in the railroad station was barefooted. When he got in his taxi, he noticed the driver was also barefooted. So the man asked the driver excuse me sir, I was just wondering why you are not wearing shoes, don't you believe in shoes? Sure we believe in shoes the driver replied. Then why don't you wear them the asked. That is a good question the driver replied, why don't we wear shoes.

Upon arriving at his hotel, the man noticed the same thing, no one was wearing shoes. He got a cup of coffee in the coffee shop & noticed the customer at the next table was not wearing shoes either. He asked him why he was not wearing shoes; don't you know about shoes he asked. Well of course I know about shoes was the reply. Then why don't you wear them he asked. That is a good question the customer said, why don't we wear shoes.

After breakfast, the man walked out side. Snow was plied everywhere but still no one was wearing shoes. He asked another local man about it. He said why don't you wear shoes? Do you know that they protect your feet and keep them warm against the snow?

Oh yes we know about shoes the local man replied. As a matter of fact the man said, that building across the street is a shoe factory. We are very proud of that factory. We gather there every week and listen to the president of the company tell us all about shoes and how wonderful they are. So then why don't you wear shoes the man asked? That is a very good question the local man replied. Why don't we wear shoes?

So do we believe in prayer? Do we know about prayer? Do we know what it could mean to our lives? Then why don't we pray? If we do pray do we pray with faith and trust; knowing that what ever answer God gives us will be the best answer for us?

Are we prayer warriors, or are we at war with our prayer life? Amen, let's pray.