

It is real!

Text: Acts 12:1-17

⁹ 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.

This text opens our eyes to something that is real. In it we see the reality of

- Opposition to the Gospel
- The spiritual realm
- The power that is made available to us when we pray

1. The reality of opposition

In this find, we find that James was killed (possibly decapitated) and Peter was going to be next.

This is clear evidence that we have an opponent, we have an enemy. He is satan, our adversary. Revelation 12:9 calls him “that old serpent”.

We are in a war. Ephesians 6 shows us that. There is violence in the kingdom of heaven and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12).

2. The reality of the spiritual realm

Peter went to sleep but was awoken by an angel to a dimension he didn't know it was real! He thought that he was still dreaming like the people in Psalms 126:1 - *When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream.*

How we need to wake up to the dimension of the spiritual realm!

Beyond the walls we see in this place today, there is a dimension of reality few of us know: it is a dimension of God's glory, it is a dimension where angels move at the voice of God, it is a dimension of power and possibilities.

Most people live their lives as if what they see and what they touch is all that there is. No - there is God, heaven, angels, power, glory, miracles, deliverance!

We need to be people who learn to draw upon the resources of that realm. Prayer is how we engage heaven. Prayer is how we access that dimension. And that brings me to the next point.

3. The reality of the power that is made available to us when we pray

In this text, have a front row seat and a window into the impact of prayer and the dynamics of prayer.

V.5 – *Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer** was offered to God by the church.*

If there is anything the church should be constantly doing is prayer. Prayer causes the kingdom of heaven to come and invade our prisons, our adversaries, our impossibilities.

That realm is real – more real than this one because that one is eternal!

Prayer opens doors:

a) Heaven's door

The light that shone in the prison came from above, from the Father of lights. When we pray, heavens open and the light of heaven penetrates any type of earthly, demonic darkness. In a moment of time, heaven invaded the prison, the spirit invaded the natural.

Prayer opens the heavens. **Matthew 16:19** speaks about keys to the kingdom of Heaven. Keys unlock, open. That is what happens when we pray (also, Matthew 18:18,19)

When heavens open, angels come: an angel came into the prison where Peter was.

- **Acts 10** – Cornelius prayed, and an angel came
- **Acts 27:23** – Paul prayed and an angel came to Paul, in the storm.
- **Judges 6** – an angel came to Gideon when the people cried out to the Lord
- **Daniel 10** – An angel came to Daniel as he prayed and fasted 21 days
- **2 Chronicles 32:20-21** – When Isaiah prayed an angel came
- **Hebrews 1:14** – angels are ministering spirits

Peter didn't know that "*what was done by the angel was **real***" (v. 9). God's spiritual realm is very real!

Prayer opens the heavens and prayer opens prison doors!

b) The prison's door

V.10 - When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

V.7 says that the chains fell off Peter's hands. Prayer breaks chains, both visible and invisible, and opens prison doors.

c) There is still one last door mentioned in this story:

Verses 13-16 - *¹³ And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. ¹⁵ But*

they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

One last door stood between Peter and the Church that was praying for him. The church was one door away from their miracle. A miracle was literally at their doorstep. Their miracle was literally knocking... and theft him knock.

When we pray God opens the heavens, angels open prisons, however, sometimes we leave the miraculous outside because

- We either fail to act or
- We do not expect to receive

Conclusion

Like Peter, we need to wake up to the reality of the realm of the spirit. Like the church of Acts, we need to pray constantly. Finally, we need to pray with the expectation and faith to receive.