

**STORY**

Peter Delivered from Prison - Acts 12

TEACHER PRAYER

Triune God of heaven, look upon us and gird us with Your Spirit so we may endure under the trials and tribulations You allow to come our way. Give us the strength to help others and to bear their burdens with them. In this way we, too, may be strengthened in the faith of Your forgiveness and Your great sacrifice for us on the cross. Help us never to despise or despair regardless of how severe and painful our trials may be. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Harass - persecute

Days of unleavened bread - precedes the fourth day of the Passover celebration

Squad - more than one soldier. In this case perhaps two by the door and one at each gate.

OUTER AIM

God does not tempt or try believers (including us) beyond what they or we are able to bear.

INNER AIM

God delivers His chosen ones from all evil by giving them power to overcome that evil.

BACKGROUND This takes place well after Christ's persecution, death, resurrection, and ascension which gained salvation for all sinners of all times, including you and me. It takes place before the three so-called journeys of Paul but after Paul's conversion, probably around the year 41 A.D.

Persecution of Christians was on the rise including the death and beheading of James. (Beheading was considered to be most disgraceful.) Little has been made of this death of James, who was the brother of Jesus' favorite disciple, John. Maybe that is why Jesus held John closely so that his faith would not fail him at the death of his brother. James is the first martyr of the 12 disciples. This is not the James that was the cousin or "brother" of the Lord. That James joined other martyrs of Bethlehem as well as Stephen as the early martyrs of Christianity.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, You have taught us that we should be willing to lose our lives for Your sake. Grant us the faith and spiritual strength never to waiver in our faith in You regardless of the severity of the trials and troubles You allow to come our way. Grant us a double portion of the Spirit that You sent to James and Peter that we, too, may spend eternity with You because of Your sacrifice for our sins. Grant us complete remission of all our sins. We trust You for our salvation. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The martyrdom of James by Herod Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great, who tried Jesus for Pilate) did not satisfy the unbelieving Jews. They and Herod sought more and got it. Imprison Peter. It was in pre-Passover days so Herod would send Peter to trial and put him to death after the Passover and so they would not defile the Passover celebration.

But God had other plans. A squad of four constantly guarded Peter. Two were chained to him and

one each was placed at the door and the prison gate. They changed shifts, but always four were with Peter while he was in prison.

Through an angel, God delivers Peter. The angel awakens Peter, not disturbing the sleeping squad of guards. Peter's chains fall off. There were no keys. The door opens and the prisoners leave the prison. All guards are still sleeping. Peter could not believe all this was happening, but he surely did like the "dream" he was having. The angel brings Peter to a familiar part of Jerusalem and then leaves him.

We also note that the other disciples and other Christians were fervently praying for Peter's deliverance. As James says (5:16), "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." God did answer their prayer. He did deliver Peter from prison.

When the angels leave, Peter's "dream" ends; he finds he is truly delivered. He then is amazed and thankful and tries to get further away from the prison.

Peter goes to the home of John, Mark's mother Mary, where a certain servant girl, Rhoda, also was. She heard a knock on the door and recognized his voice when she asked who it was. But she did not let him in, so others found it hard to believe her. Yet when the knocking continued and the others finally answered, they were astounded to find Peter there.

They, too, were thankful and were anxious to keep Peter, but Peter under wisdom of God, left for another place to preach the Good News of forgiveness of sins to all and the promise of heaven to those who believe. He left Judea for Samaria and other regions so that it would make it harder for the enemies and opposers of Christianity to find him.

We are told Peter's persecutor, Herod, died a death by worms, inflicted by God, because Herod did not give glory to the God of heaven for his fame, but let others claim him (Herod) to be a god. He also had all the guards put to death for the escape of Peter.

APPLICATION

God does not always let the wickedness and cruelty of men run rampant. In His way and at His time, He does all things for the spread of the Gospel.

When people like Herod try to oppose and hinder the spread of that Gospel news, God steps in with His way and at His time to continue the growth of his kingdom.

Even though trials and temptations may desperately seek to overwhelm us, like Peter and those other Christians we must persevere in prayer that God would help us so that we do not lose eternal life and the forgiveness of all our sins through Christ.

Like our early CLC fathers, we must hold faithfully to God's Word and promises so that we do not sacrifice heaven for some paltry offering the world may have to give, since all offerings of the world, even their best and greatest, are paltry compared to heaven and eternal life. Keep steadfast in the Word of God. You'll never go wrong, and it will never steer you wrong. It is truly our great heritage! Keep it and use it always in Christ's name!

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Ps 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Matt 7:7 - Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Matt 10:32-33 - Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Matt 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

Matt 24:35 - Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Mark 8:34-38 - And when He had called the people to Him with his disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's, will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

HYMN CHOICES

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Thy Word - TLH #261

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God - TLH #262

Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe - TLH #263

Thine Honor Save, O Christ, Our Lord - TLH #265

What Is The World To Me - TLH #430

What God Ordains Is Always Good - TLH #521

Be Still, My Soul - TLH #651

Now The Day Is Over - TLH #654

Onward Christian Soldiers - TLH #658