

But That's What You Prayed For!

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Often we forget that the early Christians were just as human as we are. There is no better example than when King Herod Agrippa decided to put Peter on trial and the church in Judea decided to pray for his release. They got more than they bargained for! The original story is recorded in Acts 12:1-19.

King Herod was tired of all these new Christians
upsetting the Jewish leaders. Herod needed their support!
So his men killed the Apostle James—
killed him with a sword!—
and when Herod saw that it pleased the Jewish leaders
he went after Peter as well.
He arrested Peter during Passover Week
and decided to put him on public trial
after the celebration.

But the church in Judea spread the word:
“Pray for Peter! Ask the Lord to spare his life!”

And the Lord did!

On the night before his trial
an angel came to Peter's cell.
He woke Peter up and removed his chains.
“Quickly, Peter! Dress and follow me!”

Peter thought he was just dreaming
but he got dressed and followed the angel.
They walked right past two guards
to the big iron gate that led to the street.
It opened all by itself!
And once he walked out onto the street
the angel vanished.

That's when Peter realized that he was really free...
and that he was an escaped prisoner
standing in the street in front of the prison.
He needed some place to hide...
and FAST!

So he hurried to the home of Mary,
the mother of his friend John Mark.
He didn't know it but many from the church were there,
all praying for God to spare Peter's life.
Peter started knocking at the front gate,
and a servant girl named Rhoda came.
She recognized Peter's voice as he called out to her
and she was so excited she ran to tell the others.

In her excitement she forgot to let him in!

Rhoda burst in on the little group, still kneeling on the floor,
and exclaimed, "He's here! Peter's at the door!"
Her interruption of their prayers irritated them.
"Have you lost your mind?" they asked.
But Rhoda kept on and finally they decided
their prayers had failed. Peter was already dead
and Rhoda had seen his angel.

In the meantime, Peter was still standing in the street,
knocking at the gate
and hoping no one would recognize him
and report him to Herod.

Thankfully, Rhoda refused to give up
and the little group of believers(?) finally went to the door.
Boy, were they surprised!
Peter finally got them to calm down
and he told them what happened.
Then he asked them to tell James and the other apostles about it
and he left for a safer place.

Of course, when Herod's guards told the king
that Peter had simply disappeared from prison,
Herod didn't believe it either.
He sent men out to search the whole town
but Peter couldn't be found
so the guards were executed instead.

Then Herod, like Peter, also left Judea for a while.
Apparently the Jewish leaders weren't too pleased with him
either.