

Crisis Response of the First Church (Acts 12:1-19)

We do not know when faced with danger or crisis in life. All of us expect to lead a smooth and peaceful life but crisis and hardship is everywhere (health, business, family...) In God, one could cope well with crisis. But others fail to overcome - fall from Faith. However, we should bear in mind that it is God's time to work when we could not do anything. Our despair will be just a starting point to miracles by God so that we should not be despaired or discouraged.

How the first church coped with crisis (Absolute Dependence/Prayer) King Herod arrested Apostle James put to death and proceeded to seize Peter also. This was the crisis of the first church **"After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. (Acts 12:4) "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5)** They prayed to God. Earnest prayer shows absolute dependence to God. Then miraculous work resulted in that Peter escaped. **"Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. (Acts 12:8-9)**

Power of prayer/ In God's Time God kept in his strong hand through Peter's miraculous experience in the prison. Same as our life. As hard as life is, pray more to solve it. Solutions happen only by prayer. Seeking God in everything - even unfair situation. God is only our refuge. Either hard or easy, big or small, heavy or light of a problem - God regards it as same. Answers to prayer comes from God in His time **"Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." (Acts 12:11)** We might not feel the miracle if we go ahead during the process - like Peter was led by angel in the prison but thought it was vision. We not know that it is preparation for a miracle when we experience suffering.

Christianity is not a ritual nor a form. Not a religious ceremony, or ethical philosophy. Escaped by angel's help from chain in prison was real just like Jesus cured sick people; We are saved from death. He forgave our sins two thousand years ago. Jesus still comes to believers by Holy Spirit today and solves our life when we pray.

Unbelief that not to believe own prayer. Then Peter came to himself and realized God rescued him. He went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. **"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." (Acts 12:15)** **Sometimes** we do not believe even when we are praying. It is unbelief babbling prayer. The first church people might not expect Peter released that fast even they prayed earnestly. God answers everything whatever we pray in trust in Him. However, it is in His time. Still no answer of prayer? it means to Wait. God surely will answer.

God Answers prayer at the last moment “The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. (Acts 12:6) We could learn that answer of prayer will be accomplished at the last moment. Do not worry if no answer yet. God will answer at decisive moment (Jericho collapsed the last seventh rounding, Red sea split at the last). God bless one who pray till the last.

Prayer in One Spirit (Power of Prayer to change/Coherent Prayer) - results in miracles. “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:19) “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16) Our life is in God’s plan and pre-destined. However, prayer has power to change this. God waits us to be prepared in faith like Abraham, Moses or repenting own sins. God gives us same condition(tool). It is prayer. God always works when we pray but why we don’t pray? Because not knowing God, lack of certainty of answer, spiritual arrogance or spiritual laziness. Most of it comes from spiritual laziness. Its characteristic is irregularity in both life and faith. When one sets up goal to pursue it; faithful, diligent, and consistent effort should follow. We should not be lazy in both spiritual and physical life. Prioritizing our life in God.

Prayer with Giving Thanks (Absolute and Complete Trust) - important factor in faith. Prayer and Giving thanks means to acknowledge almighty God and encompass complete trust in God. Giving Thanks in tribulation is not possible without entire trust in God. In the bible, Daniel received king’s decree that anyone shall be thrown into the lion’s den if pray to any other god. But three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. It showed entire trust in God. When Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat, he proclaimed fast for all people and appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “**Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.** (2Chron 20:21) It is absolute trust in God. Hardship comes to not only wicked but also to the righteous. What do we do in danger or crisis? We should find out God’s will(plan) in time of suffering. We complain when we face crisis, not knowing what will be follow. In the bible, Israelites complained frequently in every hardship. “**They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died (Numbers 21:4-6)** Venomous snake represents Satan. It opens the way for them. Current bad, and impossible sufferings will be changed to good, possible, and joyful things when we give thanks. We should give thanks in everything because God will take care of our life. They always pray holding Promised words of God “**Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? (2Chron 20:7)**

All of us encounter crisis, no one is exempted but results depends on how, in God, we cope with it. The first church’s congregation gathered and prayed earnestly. When they trusted, gave thanks to God even in despair, thereafter, God showed miracles.