

WEEKLY REFLECTION

What can we say apart from praise be to God, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think? (Eph. 3:20) The sharing from our Congo team set the scene as they talked about God's supernatural providence with a specific SSD part that was missing, and doors opening for future opportunities to better care for and educate the people of the region. This week's passage of Acts 12 echoes the same sentiment, as the apostle Peter was broken out of prison (at such a leisurely pace that he had time to dress himself and put on his sandals!) by an angel of the Lord (v.8), when neither he nor the early church expected to see each other again. (v.16) Although it can be hard to remember that the book of Acts is about real things that happened to real people because it is so action-packed and dramatic, Luke and our Congo team's sharing remind us of the true power of faith and prayer.

At the same time, Luke cautions us against the dangers of pride through Herod Agrippa I. Herod imprisons Peter after killing the apostle James because he saw how James' death pleased the Jews (v.3). He wanted more fame and acclaim for himself. Unfortunately for Herod, he's outwitted by God (v.18-19) and even meets his grisly end at the hands of an angel of the Lord (v.23), eaten by worms because he did not give God the glory.

Our Congo team talked about how faith is a "life cheat", but how many of us truly think or believe that? When we come across difficulties, is our first instinct to "stop, drop, and pray", like Peter and the early church, or do we try to solve things using our means? When God answers our prayers, are we quick to give Him the glory, or do we enjoy a (literal or metaphorical) worm-y end by pointing back to ourselves?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

What Peter went through in Acts 12 was essentially a near-death experience. It does not seem as though he expected to be rescued from (a probable) execution the next day, which may explain why he found it so difficult to believe it was neither a vision nor a dream! Have you gone through a near-death experience? What happened?

QUESTION TWO:

Devotion, deliverance, and death—How was God at work in the lives of the apostles James and Peter, and Herod Agrippa I? How did each of these men glorify or fail to glorify Him? What does this tell us about God's Person and character? How do we reconcile the fact that Peter was delivered from prison, whereas James was not delivered from death?

QUESTION THREE:

We talked about the power of faith and prayer this week, and had a few real-life examples shown to us by the Congo team. What do you remember about our sermon series on prayer from last year? Have you been able to make prayer one of your habitual practices? How can you encourage one another to persist in the act of prayer, whether individual or communal, and how can you be exercising your faith more, so as to live a life truly transformed and surrendered to God?