

“Deliverance From Bondage”
Acts 12:1-10
(Preached at Trinity, March 29, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. So far as we've been examining **Chapter 12** we've seen Herod as a man totally lacking in principle or integrity. His only motive in killing James and arresting Peter was the praise of the Jewish people. It stands as a warning to us that we maintain an absolute standard in our lives. We must stand upon high principles as people of integrity. Our motivation is the honor of our God.
2. Last time we saw the church as a praying church. They saw their brother Peter in danger and immediately threw themselves into prayer. They were fervent in their prayer, although seeing the death of James they fully expected that Peter would also die. In spite of their doubts God heard their prayer.
3. Tonight I want to direct our attention to another aspect of this passage. As we see the deliverance of Peter who was in prison bound in chains, our minds are drawn to our redemption in Christ - the deliverance of sinners from sin. This was surely the passage in Charles Wesley's mind as he wrote "And Can it Be."
 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
 Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
 Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
 I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
 My chains fell off, my heart was free;
 I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
4. Tonight I want to approach this passage from this perspective – God's mighty deliverance of His people from the bondage of sin and death.
 - I. First, We were in an absolute bondage
Peter was securely bound by iron chains – **Verse 6**
 - A. Satan had us bound like the demon possessed man at the Gadarene tombs
Mark 5:5 - "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."
2 Timothy 2:26 – "And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
 1. Satan is said to be the prince and god of this world
 2. His kingdom is the kingdom of darkness into which all men since Adam were born

3. Satan has this world ensnared by his lies and deceit
It is a terrible bondage that brings misery as men blindly grope after the things he promises.
Satan told Jesus,
Matthew 4:9 - "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

B. To Sin

1. We were held captive like Israel in Egypt
2. Sin gripped us like iron fetters
 - a. drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, marital infidelity, lying, cheating, stealing – the list is unending
 - b. Paul gives a partial list
Galatians 5:19-21 – "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
3. Sin held us fast as we were deceived into embracing its pleasures

C. We were in bondage to our own flesh

1. We are born with a sinful nature – our heart, our will, our conscience – all given over to corruption
2. By nature we do those things that satisfy our flesh – we are our own God
3. Sin is more than what we do – it is what we are!

D. There were also external forces keeping us from coming to Christ

1. Peter had two guards outside his cell
2. There are also external forces that hold us captive
 - a. Friends and family
 - b. The draw of the world

E. We were hopeless and helpless in our bondage

II. God came and awakened us from our spiritual darkness

Verse 7 – "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison"

A. The lost man is in a terrible darkness

1. He cannot see beyond this world – he is blind to those things which are spiritual
2. He continually makes plans for this life – even into his old age
This is all he knows. I will buy land, a new house, a new car
3. Jesus describes him
Luke 12:15-20 – "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and

there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

4. The lost man cannot understand anything on a spiritual level
- B. God brings light into the prison and God awakens the sleeping sinner
2 Corinthians 4:6 – “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
1. Regeneration involves a great awakening of our understanding – it is passing from spiritual death to spiritual life.
 2. God opens our understanding. We see our sin, we see the dominion of our Creator, we see the excellence of the cross.
 3. Our minds are illuminated to understand the Scriptures.
- C. God also smites the sinner awakening the conscience
Verse 7 – “And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side”
1. He exposes all of our wretched guilt
 2. We are smitten as we see our sin in all its filth
 3. God grants us faith and repentance that we might turn from our wicked ways.

III. God delivered us from our chains

Verse 7 – “And his chains fell off from *his* hands.”

Isaiah 61:1 – “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;”

- A. We are freed from sin
1. By restoring us to the favor of God and restoring us to the image of God and enabling us to love Him
 Jesus gave Himself that He might purify us a holy people
Ephesians 5:25-26 – “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
Titus 2:14 – “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
 2. We were freed from bondage to sin – we are no longer its servants
Romans 6:18 – “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”
- B. We are freed from Satan – he no longer has power over us
Ephesians 4:8 – “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
1. Christ by His death has seized from Satan the souls that he held captive

2. While Satan continues to assault us he has no power over us
 - a. We are not ignorant of his devices
 - b. Although he attacks us and desires to destroy us he is no match against the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.
1 John 4:4 – “. . . greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”
 - C. We are fed from our flesh
 1. God causes the chains to fall off by renewing our minds – our wills
 2. We now have a mind to love and honor Christ
- IV. God gives the command, “Gird thyself and follow me”
- A. The sinner is now clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 1. Our garments are white and pure
 2. They are the garments of holiness – they are spotless
 - B. The redeemed sinner rises and follows Christ
 1. We’ve seen Christ as our Deliverer, our Lord, Almighty God – We joyfully rise and follow Him - our other idols are permanently left behind
 2. Following Christ is a life of service
 3. Following Christ is a life of self-denial
Luke 9:23 – “And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
 - C. We have been brought into another kingdom
 Christ has led the captives into freedom
Colossians 1:13-14 – “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:”
 1. We have been made debtors to Christ
 2. We owe Him our worship, we owe Him our lives, our everything
- V. As we follow Christ He leads us through many difficulties as we travel to the end
- A. Peter had several dangers to pass through
 1. He had to escape from the guards he was chained to
 2. He had to slip past the other prisoners lest they give him away
 3. He had to pass by the guards on the outside of the prison
 4. The angel led him safely past every danger
 - B. The Christian life is filled with danger
 1. Our trials will be many
John 16:33 – “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”
Psalms 34:19 – “Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”
 2. We have the assurance that Christ will accompany us through them all
Matthew 28:20 – “and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world.”

- C. In the end we shall pass through the iron gate of death and enter into the New Jerusalem
Psalm 34:22 – “The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Conclusion:

1. God has done all of this for us. It is all by grace. Notice Peter was locked in prison, bound in chains. There was no human way to escape. And beside this he was asleep. God came to him with almighty power.
 God came to us while we were without hope and delivered us.
2. Our deliverance was accomplished through Christ. He accomplished all that was necessary to free us.
 Thomas Manton:
 “Christ calls upon your souls, Come, look! here is Satan disarmed, death unstinged, hell shut up, and I have the keys; sin is manacled, wrath satisfied, the law’s curse and rigour taken out of the way, heady enemies despoiled and discouraged, the world subdued and brought to my obedience, or forced to serve my glory. So that you see the conquest is full and absolute.”
3. It is Christ’s triumph, His victory – and His victory is our joy. Our lives must be spent in rejoicing over our Savior and living for His glory.
Isaiah 51:11 – “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”
4. This world is still bound in chains, locked in prison. Their only hope is that God powerfully intervenes in their lives. We must be as faithful as the early church in fervently praying for them.