

Bound No More

You want to know something that you may find odd that we all have in common? We all either were or currently are prisoners.

How come we don't ask each other the customary prison questions.

"Hey man, what are you in for?"

"How much longer you got?"

"What are you going to do when you get outta here?"

Everyone starts out a prisoner. If you have given your life to Jesus, then praise God, you are free from the law of sin and death. If you haven't then you are still bound by it. Today you can be bound no more!

But even when we know, love, and serve Jesus, you can still be bound at times in certain areas. You can still be in a place of confinement or restraint. Things end up holding you down keeping you from moving freely.

There's an account in the bible where Peter finds himself in a bit of a bind and God shows up and moves powerfully:

In Acts 12, we find Peter in prison:

Acts 12:6 (NKJV)

And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

So as Peter found himself in prison, he was not just in a cell free to move about and roam around. He was in this dark, little room and he was bound with 2 chains. As if that weren't enough, he was between two soldiers AND there were guards at the door. Peter was confined, restrained, and double guarded.

What does a guy do in a situation like that? Peter chose to sleep.

What do YOU do when you find yourself bound? Hopefully not in a physical prison, but what about when you are spiritually bound, what do you do about it? Most do the same thing Peter did, they sleep on it. What can you do about it anyway..... right?

People find themselves bound in all sorts of ways.

- Sinful habits or lifestyle
- Addictions

- Your own failings
- People's expectations
- Condemnation from the enemy
- Whatever you are lacking
- Religion

When you find yourself in the place of confinement and feel like you are restrained by these things that bind you in life. Do you just roll over and go to sleep? Do you just hope you will wake up the next day, they will be gone, and you will be free?

Look at the scriptures and see what Jesus can do....as Peter is asleep, chained in a heavily guarded cell....

Acts 12:7 (NKJV)

Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.

It appeared that Peter was in a helpless situation. But do you know that there is only ONE situation when we are truly helpless? That's when we are apart from Jesus.

Romans 5:6 (HCSB)

For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly.

While we were helpless, while we were sinners, Christ died for us. We can be saved and declared righteous through our faith in Him. And if we do that we are no longer helpless.

Jesus promised to always be with us. He send the Holy Spirit to be our helper so that we are never helpless. The helper is always present if we are connected to Jesus.

See Peter was not helpless because help from heaven arrived. An angel of the Lord stood by ol' sleepy Peter and light from heaven shone in that cell. Can I tell you that when God is your helper, He does it in the light? His light drives out all darkness and He doesn't even try to hide it.

There is a light that is so bright that any darkness must flee. It can't even stay if it wants to.

Then this angel wakes Peter up. This is a critical part in getting free.....WAKE UP! Look up to your helper instead of looking down to what binds you! There is freedom to be had but you can't have it if you don't wake up!

There is a spiritual wake up that needs to take place before freedom can enter. You have to wake up to the facts:

- You can't do it on your own

- You have a Helper
- Light is breaking through

And just like the angel said to Peter, the Spirit of God says to you, **“Arise quickly!”**

When God wakes you up you need to act quickly because if you don't, you will remember you are bound and you'll start making excuses!

“Arise quickly!” Something happens when you arise....in Peter's situation he had to physically stand up but when you are spiritually bound you have to spiritually stand up. Stand up against the things that bind you but not just stand up to them, rise up AGAINST them, knowing that you are not alone!

You have the God of the universe by your side and the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is inside of you!

“Arise quickly!” And the chains will fall off! You will be free! Just as sure as it happened for Peter it can happen for you.

Acts 12:8-9 (NKJV)

Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.” 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

See when you arise, there is still work to be done. Many people, even if they can wake up to the reality of their situation knowing that God is with them, even if they can arise quickly and the chains fall off....they stop right there! They begin to celebrate the freedom like there's nothing else to be done.

At some point the guards are gonna realize that you are free and they are coming for you! The devil isn't just going to be like “awe shucks, I lost another one”. NO, he's coming for you and if all you do is arise and celebrate, you may soon find yourself captured and bound again....

The angel told Peter, *“gird yourself and put on your sandals”* To gird yourself is to get dressed, cover yourself up....with the armor of God that Paul tells us about in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:11 (NKJV)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

When you arise, get dressed for the occasion. If you are going to play basketball, you put on shorts and athletic shoes. If you are going to work construction, you put on jeans and work boots. If you are going to fight the devil you put on the armor of God.

If you remember one part of the armor of God is the “sandals”, shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Prepare with the gospel, the good news that through Christ, you are at peace with God and He is on your side. Have confidence in this and stand firm when you arise!

Then the angel said to Peter, “Put on your garment and follow me.”

Once you put on that armor and stand in confidence of your position in Christ....follow where He is leading you. Do you know how important obedience is?

He may take you places you don't want to go, places that scare you. But if Jesus is with you, and for you, who can be against you and why should you fear?

Follow Jesus.

John 8:36 (NKJV)

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

There really is no sense in being free if you are just going to stop and celebrate there. Get dressed, and get going, follow Jesus. That is where true freedom awaits you.

He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is freedom! Follow Him. Peter did and he wasn't even really sure if he was awake or it was a dream....all he knew is he was free and he was being obedient!

Acts 12:10 (NKJV)

When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

Peter was free but there was more freedom to be had....did you catch it? “*When they were past the first and the second guard posts*”.....Not only were there 2 soldiers in his cell, and guards at the door, but then there were not 1, but 2 guard posts to get past before you even get to these iron gates!

He wasn't as free as he could be in that cell....it was just a taste. You are not as free as you can be, there's more freedom to be had in Christ.

Don't you think that Peter probably looked at those guard posts and thought “Oh, maybe I'm not free yet?” I mean, he was only part way there. Lots of inmates break out of the prison, but getting

past the sniper tower and through the razor wire is a whole other challenge on it's own, lots make it there but not many make it past there.

Colossians 3:3 (NKJV)

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

If you are in Christ then you are under the His covering. You are hidden in Christ. You are protected in Christ. He can just walk you right on out and there isn't a thing the guards can do.....

God can lead you right past the guard posts. Then even the iron gate, one that would be way to heavy and secure for you to possibly break through, as God approaches it, the gate just opens. This is the real breakthrough....This is when you have that realization and understanding that all that binds you is subject to a mighty and powerful God.

That nothing can stand in His presence. Mountains must move. And iron gates must open!

It's nothing you can do on your own. But nothing is impossible with Jesus. Nothing is too difficult for Him. He is Lord over all.

This is a God who cursed a fig tree and it withered up. This is a God who called a stinky dead body out of the grave after 4 days. This is a God who cleansed the lepers. This is a God who defeated DEATH and the GRAVE!

This is a God who sets the captives FREE. Bound no more!

Acts 12:11 (NKJV)

And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

Throughout this process, Peter wasn't even sure if it was really happening. I'd submit to you that many times when we are getting free, we aren't even sure if it's really happening.

But Peter just did what he was told as if it were real. I bet he's glad that he did! Because once he was outside the gates and down the street, free and clear, he realized God had delivered him!

Sometimes you may not be sure, that's actually OK.....you don't have to be sure you just have to be obedient. Listen to the voice of God whether through His word, a friend, in prayer, an angel, a song, or however He's speaking to you.....be obedient. If you are unsure, get wise counsel.

What might seem a little crazy or risky or scary, just might be the way to be bound no more.

It starts with a WAKE UP! It doesn't start with the open gate, it concludes with the open gate.

How often is God trying to grant freedom but we are looking for the wrong step to take place.
Wake Up!

Today it's time to wake up. Whatever it is that binds you, look up, your help is here. His name is Jesus and His light penetrates even the darkest of darkness.

He says to you, the chains are broken, arise quickly, get dressed for battle, and follow me.

He will lead you out of bondage and into real, lasting freedom. He will hide you and protect you. He will never leave you. Will you answer His call today? Who the Son sets free is free indeed!

Today if that's you, if you need freedom in any area of your life, there's nothing to be ashamed of, we've all been there more than once.

If it's not you, I want you to see what the free people did:

Acts 12:5 (NKJV)

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

The church was praying earnestly for Peter. And in v12, many had assembled at a home and were praying in the night when most people were sleeping.

Will you pray for those who are bound today? Will you pray for their freedom by a supernatural intervention by God Almighty?