

Acts 12:12

So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

In today's devotional verse, what was happening was that Peter was thrown in prison for preaching the gospel, and notice what the church was doing, "*constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church*":

† *Acts 12:5-6 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. 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.*

Now in our twenty-first century mindset of the church, we think of how our churches are today, with church buildings and seats or pews (which if you think about it, pews have become a thing of the past, as churches now have individual chairs). Parking lots full of cars and a stage for the worship team to be on with lights and PowerPoint presentations, and the word to be taught from the pulpit. Most churches today have coffee shops and bookstores. One church I was a part of even had a restaurant.

Now before you turn me off, I am not bashing any of these things, but I just want us to have a mental picture of what we think the church is when we read of the church in the book of Acts or the New Testament and this is a visual of the church that we tend to have. So just like it says in today's verse that "*constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church*" and we read that and think of people gathered together in a church building, much like the ones we attend today.

But when it talks about the church here in Acts, this is not referring to a building, but rather a group of people, or a group of believers to be more exact. So as we read in today's verse that the church, (Christians) were gathered together praying for Peter, who was in prison. But when you read today's verse, you find out that Peter did not go to a church building to find his brothers and sisters in the Lord, but rather he went, "*to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark*" and when he got there, Peter found them in "*constant prayer*" for him.

Now one thing we should think about is that this was not a "Church Event". They did not schedule a prayer and praise night at the church. No turning down the lights and having that right soft mellow music playing in the background to set the mood. No, they just knew through word of mouth, no texting, no social media, no email blast. Simply, telling one another that "*our brother Peter is in jail, let's pray for him*". And when we read that "*constant prayer was offered to God for him*" that tells me that this was not a, "*Hey let's schedule an hour or so meeting that*

will take us away from our busy schedule to pray for Peter. ” No, because constant means, nonstop, on going, all day and all night prayer happening in Mary’s house for Peter.

Oh how we (I include myself in this) have turned prayer into a scheduled, nonchalant, only if I have time, event (Yes we have turned prayer in the church into an event, instead of a common practice.) that we add in our calendars in our phones as a “tentative”, meaning “*if I have time for someone else*” type of event, because right now it’s all about me thing (Yes I am including me in this as well). Now I know we all have life, family, jobs, kids, school, etc... yet we have turned us and our own life as being so important, that we can’t spend time with others, for others in prayer?

† **Philippians 2:4** *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

I was talking to a friend at church Sunday and he was saying how he will get on social media just to do a quick check, and forty five minutes to an hour later, he would think, “*Man I just wasted my time on social media, when I could have used that time to do the things that I want to do for the Lord, or even for my own dreams and ambitions.*” And we all do that, no wonder we don’t have time for others, because videos and peoples updates on social media take a front seat, and praying for others take a back seat, or it’s actually left on the side of the road as we drive off into social media land leaving it far behind.

Yet, we all have our own excuses for why we can’t pray or find time to join together with others to pray for others. But then that’s exactly what they are, a bunch of excuses, and like I have said before, when you give God an excuses, it’s the same thing as saying “No” to the Lord (Oxymoron: No & Lord).

James says to: “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*” **James 5:16** But he never says to see if you can find time in your busy schedule to “*pray for one another, that you may be healed.*” Because if we did then no one would be healed.

Just something to think about next time the church says that they are going to meet and pray at church or someone’s house, and you say, “No thanks, I’m busy”. Where is the love of others in that? Instead, why not open up your home up like Mary did, and call others to join you in prayer in your home!

† **John 13:34-35** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

- † **Zechariah 8:21** *The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, And seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also."*

- † **Zechariah 8:20-21 (MSG)** *A Message from GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies: "People and their leaders will come from all over to see what's going on. The leaders will confer with one another: 'Shouldn't we try to get in on this? Get in on GOD's blessings? Pray to GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies? What's keeping us? Let's go!'"*