

# **“Peter Slept!”**

**Acts 12 (12:1-19)**

**Intro.** – How do you deal with fear? When something is really working on you, what course of action(s) do you take to deal with it? There are various methods used in thwarting fear. For instance, some take the “play it safe course.” Let me illustrate what is meant by this. An old farmer was sitting on his porch when a stranger came by asking, “How’s is your cotton doing?” “Don’t have any,” was the answer. “Didn’t plant any because I was afraid of the boll weevil.” “Well then, how about your corn?” “Didn’t plant any. I was afraid of drought” answered the farmer. “Well, how are your potatoes doing?” “Don’t have any because I was afraid of the ole tater bugs.” The stranger finally asked, “Well, what did you plant.” “Nothing!” answered the farmer. “I’m just playing it safe.”

Another course of action people use is the “worry it to death course.” This is the action taken when they fear the worst will happen. This is when one’s thoughts actually contribute to making matters worse. Someone once wrote: “Fear is the wrong use of imagination. It is anticipating the worst, not the best that can happen.” Again, let me illustrate by what is meant by this. A salesman was driving down a lonely country road one dark/rainy night. Suddenly, he blew a tire. He opened the trunk – no lug wrench. But there was light from a farmhouse a mile or so up the road. He set out on foot through a driving rain toward this farmhouse. Surely the farmer will have a lug wrench, he thought. Yea, but it was late, what if the farmer and his family were asleep? Maybe he won’t answer the door and even if he does, he’ll be angry at being woke up in the middle of the night. This thought made the salesman angry. What right did that farmer have to refuse to loan him a lug wrench? After all he was stranded in the middle of nowhere, soaked to the bones. The farmer is nothing but a selfish clod, thought the salesman. Well, the salesman finally reached the house. He banged loudly on the door. A light went on inside and a window opened. A voice cried out, “Who is it?” The salesman white faced with anger, responded, “You know good and well who it is. It’s me and you can keep your blasted lug wrench. I wouldn’t borrow it now if you had the last one on earth.”

One last course of action some use “lay at the feet of the Lord course.” This is the course of action we find in our text. The apostle Peter is in the throes of death and what is he doing? -- Sleeping. Most would expect a man in this situation to literally *be quaking in his boots*, but not Peter! No, Peter was sleeping. The question most obvious is how/why? How could Peter be sleeping under these circumstances.

*Purpose: to learn what Peter had which enabled him to sleep during such dire circumstances*

One can hardly expect to see Peter asleep as he faced the most difficult of circumstances. There are lessons to be learned in this study of when Peter Slept!

## **I PEACE of Conscience**

### **A. What Did He Have?**

#### **1. Peter had a conscience... – a what?...**

a. Romans 2:14-15 *“For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing, or else defending them.”*

b. God given monitor to help in discerning right/wrong

c. it can be described as “an accuser or excuser.”

note: source of judgment for some... point is that Peter had a conscience just like we...

#### **2. Peter had a peaceful conscience**

a. free from guilt... when one goes “contrary” to their Biblical conscience there is no peace...

b. illus. one without peace because gone contrary to his conscience = Cain

c. illus. one with peace even though had gone contrary to his conscience = David

### **B. Why Did He Have It?**

#### **1. Recognized a need**

- a. Peter knew holiness when he was in the presence of Holiness – Luke 5:1-8 (great quantity of fish) v 8 *“But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus feet saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’”*
- b. freedom from guilt = peaceful conscience
- 2. Recognized the only solution
  - a. only the blood of Christ – Hebrews 9:14 *“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”*
  - b. that which is not done in faith (i.e. a good conscience) is sin – Romans 14:23 *“Because he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith, and whatever is not from faith is sin.”*

The absolute key to a good conscience is being at peace with God!

## II CONFIDENCE in God

- good way to illustrate this is a child must build confidence in parents...

### A. God as Sovereign Authority

- 1. We have but two choices – Satan (Father of lies, Son of Perdition, the Ruler of Darkness)... Mighty God (omnipotent – there is none Like Him):
- 2. Up to each accountable individual to choose which one of these will ultimately be sovereign authority in their lives...

Comes down to choosing between One who is full of grace and mercy to one who is the exact opposite!

### B. Sense of Satisfaction

- 1. In Christ
  - a. none claimed what He claimed what He claimed and back up it like Jesus did...
  - b. none did what He did... Calvary, the empty tomb, promise to return...
  - c. none promise what He promises... eternity in His presence with His saints...
- 2. In Himself
  - a. after the resurrection, Peter was obedient in helping to lead the first century church...
  - b. application... obedience leads to being at peace with self in presence of Holy God...
- 3. In Others
  - at fellowship with others... able to rejoice in worship and service together in Him...

### C. Sense of Security

- 1. In this life = God’s providential care... material needs... all fears are His... spiritual needs...
- 2. In the life to come = Peter’s life reminds us of the security we also have... a home

Peter’s confidence same confidence Paul expressed in 2 Timothy 1:12 *“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”*

## III FEARLESS to Death

- if you want to murder a conversation simply bring up the reality of death...
- Illus. – my fear of tornados... fear of death is most potent... places people in a bondage (Hebrews 2:15) and causes them to do things would not do otherwise:

### A. Death to the Unforgiven Sinner

- 1. Separation from life as we know here... unknown always brings on fear...
- 2. Followed by Judgment (Hebrews 9:27)
  - a. eternal destiny is given... heaven or hell...
  - b. choice is left up to all accountable individuals...

### B. Death to the Forgiven Sinner

1. Blessings (after Judgment)
  - a. rewards (Romans 8:18) *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*
  - b. presence of God forever, in worship... and service...
2. Liberation (no more bondage)
  - a. freedom for all sufferings of this world...
  - b. freedom from temptation of sin...

Peter’s lack of fear was the direct result of his being a true Biblical Christian...:

**Conclusion:** Story is told of a man who got a permit to open the first tavern in a small town. The members of a local church were strongly opposed to the bar; so, they began to pray that God would intervene. A few days before the tavern was scheduled to open, lightning hit the structure and burned it to the ground.

The people of the church were a bit surprised but also pleased – until they received notice that the tavern owner was suing the church. He contended their prayers were responsible for the burning of the building. They denied the charge.

At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, the Judge wryly said, “At this point I don’t know what my decision will be, but it seems that the tavern owner believes in the power of prayer but the church people don’t.”

When the apostle Peter was put into prison, the church prayed on his behalf. But when this same group was told Peter was knocking at the door they didn’t believe it. As one commentator put it, “Prayer without expectancy may be unbelief in disguise.”

Peter slept for one simple reason – he trusted the Lord. The question we need to answer – do we?