

THE STORY OF PETER

And

THE STORY OF RUTH

Aunt Hattie's Bible Stories

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by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PETER SURPRISES A PRAYER MEETING

WHILE these things were taking place inside the Church, the hatred of the Jewish rulers, elders, and scribes increased. Herod, the king, saw that by persecuting the Christians he could favor the Jews to his advantage. Therefore he sent out and had James, the brother of John, slain with the sword. The Jews were pleased and so the king sent for Peter and had him put in prison. He thought to kill him later as he had James.

The Christians in Jerusalem heard of Peter's arrest and imprisonment. They called for a prayer meeting to pray for his deliverance.

Over in the prison Peter was sleeping on the cold stone floor, bound by chains to soldiers lying one on each side of him. Outside the door of the dungeon were two guards to make escape of the victim impossible.

However, the king, the Jewish rulers, the soldiers, and the guards knew nothing of the power of God to care for His own.

In the night the Lord sent an angel down to that prison cell where His faithful servant and the soldiers were asleep.

First, the angel turned on the light. No, not an electric light, but a spotlight that he had brought with him from heaven. Stooping down he shook Peter and said, "Get up quickly!" And, as Peter awakened and stood up, the chains fell off his hands.

"Put on your clothes, fasten your shoes, wrap your cloak around you and follow me," he said.

Peter obeyed the word of the angel, but he thought he was dreaming. It seemed too good to be true.

The angel led the way out through the first and second courts and on toward the iron gate, the last one to freedom. How in the world would they get through that strong gate? Peter did not know, but they kept right on and when they got to it, it opened of itself, and Peter and the angel walked out into the street. Then the angel left Peter, for he did not need him anymore.

I was thinking of times in our lives when we seem to be hemmed in on every side by circumstances. We want to go to college or we have desires for a larger life of usefulness but we are, as it were, in prison.

When we are wholly surrendered to Jesus Christ, as Peter was, willing to go or to stay as He directs, I believe the Lord Jesus will do for us, too. And, if we keep on obediently, every step of the way, then when we reach the “iron gates,” God Himself will open them for us.

Standing alone in the street Peter came to himself and realized that the Lord had sent an angel and delivered him from death at the hand of Herod. His next thought was, “Where shall I go?”

When he had considered the matter, he decided to go to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and that was the very place where they were having a prayer meeting for him.

It was still dark, but Peter knocked on the gate and a young girl, by the name of Rhoda, came to see who was there.

Peter said, “Come, let me in!”

When Rhoda heard his voice, she knew it was Peter and was so delighted that, instead of opening the gate, she ran back to the house to tell them that Peter was out at the gate.

They said, “Rhoda, you are crazy! Peter is in prison.”

But she kept on saying over and over, “Yes, it is Peter. I tell you that Peter is out there at the gate.”

Peter kept on knocking for he could scarcely wait until they would come to let him in. Finally someone went out and opened the gate and they all were astonished to see him.

They all talked at once and made such confusion that Peter had to put up his hands and motion to them to keep still. Then he told them the story of the angel bringing him out of prison.

We, too, often do as these Christians did.

They had been praying all night for God to deliver Peter, but when He did they were surprised.

The next morning when the soldiers who had been bound with Peter awakened to find the prisoner gone, they were greatly excited. When the news reached Herod he commanded that those soldiers and guards should be put to death.

The ministry of Peter through all these early years of the Christian Church was very wonderful. God called him especially to preach to his own nation, Israel, his own people, the Jews; but as we have seen, to him was given the great privilege of opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles also.

And thus, we see Peter, the fisherman, the one who so often spoke out of turn and blundered, even to denying his Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit and used of God in a mighty way. He became what Jesus said of him the first time He saw him, "You are Simon. You shall be called Cephas, or Peter, which means a stone or rock." It was only through the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit that this man became Peter, the rock.

Are you discouraged? Do you blunder along life's way? Are you continually making mistakes? Turn your life wholly over to the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did. Let God fill you with His Holy Spirit and I'll promise that God will use you, too, in a wonderful way.

THE FIRE BY THE SEA

There were seven fishermen, with nets in their hands,
And they walked and talked by the seaside sands;
Yet sweet as the sweet dew fall
The words they spake, though they spake so low,
Across the long, dim centuries, flow,
And we know them, one and all –
Aye! know them and love them all.

Seven sad men in the days of old,
And one was gentle and one was bold,
And they walked with downward eyes;
The bold was Peter, the gentle was John,
And they all were sad, for the Lord was gone,

And they knew not if He would rise –
Knew not if the dead would rise.
The livelong night, till the moon went out
In the drowning waters, they beat about;
Beat slow through the fog their way;
And the sails drooped down with the wringing wet,
And no man drew but an empty net,
And now 'twas the break of day—
The great, glad break of day.

“Cast in your nets on the other side!”
(‘Twas Jesus speaking across the tide;)
And they cast and were dragging hard;
But that disciple whom Jesus loved
Cried straightway out, for his heart was moved;
“It is our risen Lord—
Our Master, and our Lord!”

Then Simon, girding his fisher’s coat,
Went over the nets and out of the boat –
Aye! First of them all was he;
Repenting sore the denial past,
He feared no longer his heart to cast
Like an anchor into the sea –
Down deep in the hungry sea.

And the others, through the mists so dim,
In a little ship came after him,
Dragging their nets through the tide:
And when they had gotten close to the land
They saw a fire of coals on the sand,
And, with aroma of love so wide, Jesus, the crucified!
‘Tis long, and long, and long ago
Since the rosy lights began to flow
O’er the hills of Galilee;

And with eager eyes and lifted hands
The seven fishermen saw on the sands
The fire of coals by the sea—
On the wet, wild sands by the sea.
‘Tis long ago, yet faith in our souls
Is kindled just by that fire of coals
That streamed o’er the mists of the sea;
Where Peter, girding his fisher’s coat,
Went over the nets and out of the boat,
To answer, “Lovest thou Me?”
Thrice over, “Lovest thou Me?”

– Poem of Alice and Phoebe Gary

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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