

## Peter in the Spiritual Battlefield (Acts 12)

After YAHSHUA left the earth His disciples became active in the work of evangelism that He commanded them. In those days King Herod in his cruelty attacked many believers, including James, the brother of John. This cruelty seemed to Herod a means of sport to please the Jews. Later Peter was also arrested during the Feast of Unleavened Bread to have him killed after Passover. He was bound with two chains between the guards, while guards guarded the prison. Herod did not understand the power of prayers of God's saints; the prayer of faith opens heaven and moves God's heart to change things. No power is greater than our God's power, and when He acts who can thwart His plan? Even nature obeys Him. Human's obstacles are nothing in the hands of our God. When He raises His right hand, and strikes with power, we know things will have to happen, because the battle belongs to the Lord. Peter was seemly hopeless in the power of those chains, but not for long, for prayers were going up on his behalf; YAHWEH then sent His angel to free him in the beginning of the day. Deep in his sleep, he had no idea of what was happening. The angel then touched him, waking him up. He instructed him to get up quickly! With that, immediately the chains fell off his wrists, losing its power on him. He was commanded to get dressed, to put on his sandals, and to wrap the cloak around himself. At that moment all seemed like a dream to him; he thought it to be a vision, not being completely awake, until he left the last gate, which was automatically opened leading them to the street, from where the angel left him. There he came to himself and said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp". These were hard days for the believers in YAHSHUA to remain faithful in view of persecution from every side. But He warned them of this before He left. Although Peter was chained up physically under the power of King Herod, he was really free, for the One in him was greater than the one in the world. The believers in YAHSHUA were set to pray with one mind and one accord and YAHWEH heard them. It all happened in such a miraculous way that they were so shocked to the point of not believing the reality before them, just like when YAHSHUA appeared to the disciples after His resurrection.

At day-light after Peter had been freed, there was such a commotion among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter; and they paid with their own life under the order of Herod. When the Lord YAHSHUA after His resurrection instated Peter, he experienced the change of the true spiritual birth. His life no longer had selfish means; he lived now in the battlefield to defend the Gospel entrusted to him as a fisherman for Christ. After the death of Herod, who was struck by an angel, God's message flourished and multiplied, as they continue faithful in sharing the message of salvation to all.

In spite of persecutions from the Jewish religious authorities, the apostles, including Peter, did not stop to teach about YAHSHUA and the good news of the Gospel, even when put in jail. YAHWEH again sent His angel to free them; and only by the opening of the doors of the jail, he brought them out, and commanded them to "Go and stand in the temple complex and tell the people all about this life". We see clearly here a spiritual battle against all that has to do with YAHSHUA's teachings. The Jewish leaders tried to close the doors to the Gospel, but God widely

opened the doors and the disciples were sent to continue preaching in the temple complex. When the disciples then were told not to speak on the name of YAHSHUA they replied, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up YAHSHUA, Whom you had murdered by hanging Him on a tree. God exalted this man to His right hand as ruler and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit Whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:17-32). And this is the heart of the message the Jewish nation needed to hear. "There is no other name under the heaven that can save, only the name of YAHSHUA". Peter and the disciples carried the message of the Gospel of our Lord YAHSHUA everywhere they went. Yes, they were witnesses of the wonders performed by Him; they were witnesses of His death and resurrection; they were the light that needed to be shone in the world so full of darkness. YAHSHUA told them, "Let your light so shine so men can see your good works and glorify your Father Who is heaven". The beams of their light had to point to the Savior, YAHSHUA's love for the world, not to what they were doing.

When YAHWEH chose us to sanctification, He also called us to be in the battlefield; the sanctified life is a victorious life, one who learned to apply faith in every circumstance in submission to the will of YAHWEH. Never giving up, always persisting and preserving in the knowledge of YAHSHUA. When the battle is through persecution, or any other way caused visibly by men, we are to stand with the sword of the Spirit against the lies and deceits to protect the message entrusted to us to tell others; when the battle is between the soul and the Spirit, we must surrender to Him, for the cleansing and molding of our life. Every believer has his/her battlefield. Many times we try to run away from it and forget nothing is happening. The only way to be victorious is to be courageous, confronting the enemy applying the full armor of our Lord available to us, as James said, "Be **subject** to God; **resist** the devil, and **he will flee** from you" (James 4:7).

Peter, John, James, Paul and all the disciples died in their battlefield defending the message of the Gospel, so we could have it today. Their deaths were not of defeat, but of courage and love for their Lord, Whom they served. Many in our world today are dying in the battlefield for the Lord YAHSHUA. Their courage, which spring from faith and love for God, compels them to give up all for our Savior. In their persistence of faith lays the victory and the reward waiting for them in heaven. We, who have not gone through such a battlefield, need to be ready to suffer when the time comes; we must walk the same battlefield, where we too would give our life for the One Who gave His life for us, so we could be saved from the power of the enemy. The death of a martyr is the most honored death; it is the death that connects the soldier of Christ with heaven and our Savior, Who will be waiting to welcome him/her with thousands of His angels. That's what I call fighting the good fight! One of the most beautiful deaths of a martyr was that of Stephen registered in Acts seven. He was the first martyr of that time to die for our Lord. Filled by the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven, He saw God's glory, with YAHSHUA standing at the right hand of God, and he said, "Look! I see heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God! With that they threw him out of the city and stoned him; and as they were stoning him, he called out: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord do not charge them with this sin"! And saying this, he fell

asleep (Acts 7:54-60). They all died in the hands of their persecutors; but not as victims, but heroes of the faith. They did not run away; neither gave up the faith; they fought the perfect fight in their battlefield and YAHWEH was pleased to take them home. Peter's death was not that of a common death; his had to be by crucifixion upside down. So great was his devotion for His Master after denying to know Him. Today we have His Words affirming His promise to us. His Words are powerful and sharp as the two-edged sword. Never leave home without it and apply whenever possible as you face the enemy in your battlefield. YAHSHUA did, and we must do it too, even more!