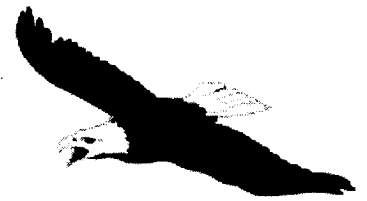
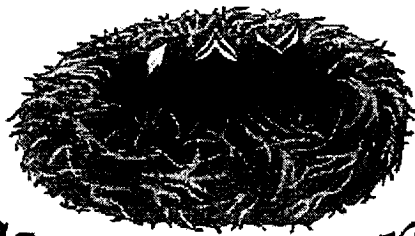


*They shall mount up...  
...with wings as eagles  
Isaiah 40:31*



## On Eagles Wings

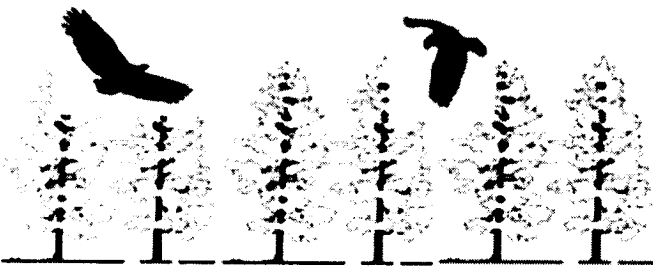
# AERY NUGGETS

March 2012

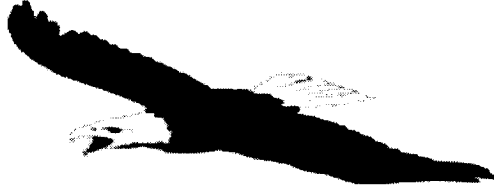
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**Faith, Prayer and the Eleventh Hour** Acts 12: 1-12  
*Steven J. Faulkner*

Many years ago, as the fact of my diminishing eyesight began to weigh heavily on my mind, I can remember becoming very anxious about my future. Specifically, there was a growing sense of urgency to sell my business and to move to another area and find a different line of work; the grim realities of blindness were looming ominously before me. The door appeared to be closing on my chosen career as well as on all of my cherished dreams to that point, and I simply could not discern the path ahead. After expressing many an anxious thought, a good Christian friend advised, "Rest this thing with the Lord; He has the plan all clearly in view, but you must look to Him in faith. And, do not be surprised if the answer doesn't come until the last minute—God often acts at the eleventh hour." My dear friend, have you noticed that God often acts at the eleventh hour? I believe that is by design—it may sometimes seem that our prayers are not heard because we might see nothing happening that appears to change our circumstances; but be assured, the God of the universe is working on behalf of His children, and He hears our prayers! Looking back now, I can clearly see God's hand on the course of events in my life. My answer did come, but not till the eleventh hour, and though His path carried me far from what I had previously known, I can see the miracle now and own that I have been blessed beyond what I could have imagined. What an amazing God we have! Not only does He hear and act upon the prayers of His children, but He is able to turn around what seems to be a disaster and that even when the hour is very late, and all hope seems to be dwindling!



I believe we see in Acts 12:1-12 a vivid example of this mighty power to deliver, even at the eleventh hour. The church was being persecuted in those days. The Gospel was being preached in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea, and in Samaria, just as the Lord had said (Acts 1:8). But, in the wake of this growing testimony of the power of the Gospel, the enemies of Grace pushed back violently. Stephen had been martyred by this time, and Saul of Tarsus had led the charge to persecute Christians wherever he could find them. King Herod, anxious to solidify his relationship with the Jews, had now begun to afflict the church as we read in verses 1-3: "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)" James, one of the sons of Zebedee, had been taken and killed by the command of Herod; and, now it was to be Peter! Peter had been arrested, but Herod knew that it wouldn't do to put Peter to death during a Jewish feast; so, he was locked away and heavily guarded until those days were over—then, he was to be brought forth and executed. And, Herod wanted nothing to go wrong with this plan, so he placed Peter in what would be considered maximum security for that day—a carefully watched cell deep within a prison, separated from the outside world by a heavy iron gate. Peter was guarded by a total of 16 armed men devoted entirely to keeping him secured. These 16 men were highly motivated to guard Peter well, as the penalty of that day for letting prisoners escape was certain death. Furthermore, Peter had chains upon his hands, and two armed guards close by at all times, one on one side of him, and one on the other. There could be no escape, or at least, that is what Herod must have thought as he set this plan in place. While it was quite true that the Christians in that area could not deliver Peter themselves, they did not at all seem to find the situation before them to be hopeless. In verse 5 we read, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Prayer was made without ceasing, even though to all appearances, the prospects for Peter were very bleak.



Sometimes I have

heard people say, "well, all we can do now is pray." My dear friend, prayer is precisely the correct response of the children of God in the face of any type of emergency; prayer is a sign of dependence on the Lord, and it should be one of the chief characteristics of the children of God—we should be a people of prayer. But, how often do we seek to take the burdens and emergencies of life upon ourselves? That tendency can only lead to worry. We must pray, and then rest our concerns with the Lord. We read these very comforting words in Philippians 4:6: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And, what is the result of this prayer and supplication with thanksgiving? "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," (Phil 4:7).

We need to pray, and that at all times, for this is the expectation of God for His children. We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Regardless of the circumstances, we are to pray, and that without ceasing—these are the things that should characterize Christians, come what may.

I wonder if we see an example of that "peace of God which passeth all understanding" keeping Peter's heart in Acts 12:6? There we read, "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison." Just imagine this situation! It was deep in the night, perhaps the very early hours of the morning of the day when Herod would bring Peter forth before the people in order to do his worst. Peter was well secured, with no obvious hope of relief from the outside, and perhaps there would be just minutes or at most a few hours of time left to him before his execution, yet we find Peter sleeping soundly. His sleep was so deep that when the deliverance came in the person of the angel of the Lord, Peter had to be awakened firmly: "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands," (verse 7). It was indeed the eleventh hour, and Peter was in what the world might call a hopeless situation; but, none of this is any problem for the God of Salvation! We read that Peter's bonds fell away as he stood, and unchallenged by those 16 armed guards who were charged with his security, he passed with the angel through the

checkpoints of each ward, and watched the heavy iron gate that prevented his freedom to swing open like an automatic door in a modern public building. And, suddenly, Peter was free in the city; and the tables were soon to be turned on those who previously sought his life!

My dear Christian reader, I do not know the hard realities that may now be weighing on your mind, but I know there is One who has numbered the very hairs of your head; He knows your sorrows and fears, and each and every teardrop you may have shed has been noted as we read in Psalm 56:8: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" The God of the universe loves His children, and He has His eye on us at all times; He is quite able to save, and nothing can prevent Him. It may be that we will not necessarily be delivered from death the way Peter was in the portion above; we read in this very account that James' life was poured out while the life of Peter was spared. But, I do know that come what may, the child of God is never alone: "...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," (Hebrews 13:5). Why do we worry so? There is no situation that is too difficult for the Lord—our God can do anything! There is no limit to God's ability to deliver, despite what might appear to be overwhelming circumstances. Jonathan did not need an army at his back in order to win the day in 1 Sam. 14. He took only his armor bearer with him when he attacked and defeated a group of 20 Philistines saying, "come and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us, for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few," (verse 6). The Lord delivered the badly outnumbered Jonathan by His power such that even the enemies of Israel were astonished. My dear Christian friend, do not take upon yourself the cares and anxieties of this life. The One who truly is able to deliver bids you to rest all with Him: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you," (1 Peter 5:7).

***Now, these may be comforting words indeed for the child of God; on the other hand, if you are not a believer in Christ, there is yet good news for you: this same God who miraculously delivered Peter so long ago, knows your situation, and He wants you to trust Him for your salvation. He loves you very much, so much that He once sent His Son into the world to die for your sins, that by believing on Him, you might receive life: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16).***

*OEW welcomes the submission of articles to be considered for publication. If so*

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