

But Prayer

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Peter was therefore kept in prison, **but constant prayer** was offered to God for him by the church.

(Act 12:5)

"But prayer..." Here is the spiritual answer to a spiritual challenge, and very much depended on the outcome. If the victory had not been won at Jerusalem, if the saints had been scattered, disheartened and defeated, what would have happened to the Word of God? The real battle was concerning the release of that Word. The supreme concern was not what should happen to the church in Jerusalem, nor even what should happen to Peter; what really mattered was what should happen to the Word of God. When the saints gathered for prayer at Mary's home, though they probably did not realize it, they were fighting out the battle of world-evangelization, of the growth and multiplication of the Word of Christ. There are two 'buts' in this chapter. The first of them was the responsibility of the church: they refused to be moved. Satan was attempting to overthrow, to scatter, to destroy love and to turn faith into despair, when he was suddenly checked by a mighty spiritual resistance - *"But prayer..."* It was a turning point. The whole course of events was arrested, and there followed a blessed sequence of Divine acts of deliverance. It was straightforward after this, for God had taken matters in hand, and was sweeping aside all opposition, that His people might be led out and onward to new triumphs. In verse 24 we have the great Divine 'but', "BUT *the word of God grew and multiplied.*" This was the answer to their praying; the first responsibility lay with them, then God took things up in a mighty way, and said 'but' by releasing His Word far and wide.

Like the church at Jerusalem, we too, shall be confronted with attacks upon our faith, our patience and our love. If we do not resolutely face up to these personal and local conflicts, pressing through to victory in the Lord's Name, what hope is there of increase and multiplication? On the other hand, if we do take up the challenge as they did, by stemming the onrush of spiritual disaster with our *"But prayer..."* God will surely respond with His 'but', and clear the way for increase and new fullness.