

The Devil Thinks He Can Hold You

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the power of prayer and the belief that God answers prayers supernaturally. It shares the story of Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison through prayer and God's intervention, encouraging listeners to have faith that God can set them free from any captivity or darkness. The message highlights the importance of prayer, the assurance that God can overcome any plot of the enemy, and the invitation to surrender to Jesus for a transformed life filled with purpose and hope.

Scripture: Acts 12:5, Psalms 2:1, Revelation 3:7, Ephesians 6:12, Matthew 21:22, John 8:36, 2 Corinthians 5:17, James 5:16, Isaiah 61:1

Topics: "Power of Prayer", "Divine Deliverance"

Description

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Transcript

Now, I want to answer a question that some of you might be asking tonight. Why do we get together on Wednesday night to pray for you? We've been doing this for quite a few years now. It started in New York City quite a few years ago, and it was Tuesday night in New York, and then when COVID came, we moved out here to our Bible school in Grantville, Pennsylvania, the Bible School of Times Square Church, and we just stayed here because it's such a pleasure to pray with all these students that come to us from all over the world and the congregation from the local church that's here.

And we pray for you because we know something, and here's what we know. The devil thinks he can hold you, but we know he can't. When we pray, God answers.

And I want you to expect an answer to prayer tonight, and I'm talking to you. You who are sitting at home and maybe addicted or depressed or you feel all alone, you feel like you have no purpose for life, you don't know if you have a future, maybe you feel like a hopeless situation is literally surrounding you, but you see the devil is trying to convince you that he can hold you there and keep you there and destroy you there, but the reality is he can't because when people pray, God answers. I believe that with all my heart.

I've seen it too often throughout my life to ever doubt that God answers prayer. I could spend the whole night just telling you instances of where God answers and does things. There was a man just a few weeks ago that there was a message preached here on Wednesday night somewhat along the lines of what I'm about to share tonight, and as somebody was listening to the message and this person came into their heart, they sent them the message, and when the message clicked on this gentleman's telephone, he was sitting there with a gun in his mouth ready to take his life, and instead of taking his life, he decided to reach out for eternal life and gave his life to Jesus Christ, and we thank God for that.

Devil thinks he can hold you, but we know that when we pray, he can't, and I'm going to show it to you in the scriptures tonight. We're going to start with Psalm 2, Psalm 2. Father, I thank you, God, for your word, which indeed has incredible power, which shows us something of your heart. It shows us your power.

It shows us your kingdom. Actually, it shows us our own futures if we will let it. Tonight I'm asking you, Lord, that we would have the privilege of going into somebody's situation, into an inner prison in somebody's mind or heart and bringing the word of God there and the life and freedom that was bought for them on the cross of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago.

Lord, I can speak, but you can put power behind what is your word, and Lord Jesus Christ, you said you came to set free captives. You came to give sight to the blind. You came to have the treasure of heaven spoken to those who know their poverty.

You came to heal those that have been so wounded and bruised they don't think they'll ever be whole, and you told the people that this day, this truth is fulfilled in your ears. So God, I'm asking you to give faith to somebody tonight to believe that in spite of how dark this room that they're in might be, you are able to go there and you can set them free and set their feet on a new course and a new life that will bring honor and glory to your name. Lord Jesus Christ, we're asking you as we are approaching the nearness of your coming that you would do something in our generation that is so far beyond anything we've ever thought or even asked for.

We ask you for such a number of people to come into your kingdom that they can't possibly be counted. We ask you to work in power again, God, through the internet. Lord, reach into situations, into homes tonight, Lord, those that are listening to this on their cell phone, on a laptop, or on some device in their situation, they find themselves in God Almighty, open their prison and let them out and let them come into the abundant life that you have promised them through Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank you and we praise you for it in Jesus' mighty name. Psalm 2, the psalmist says, why did the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? What is the source of the anger, in a sense, that gets into the hearts of those who hate the ways of God? Why do they hatch a plot as it is that they're not able to fulfill? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed saying, let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh and the Lord shall hold them in derision.

Another translation says the Lord will just mock the foolishness of their thought that we can break the will of the people of God. We can destroy their confidence in their God and we can cast away the influence that they have in their society that causes our behaviors to be put into some form of restriction. We're living in that kind of a society today where the godless want to cast off all restraint and they want the influence of the godly completely gone.

You'll notice, probably the students don't because you've handed your cell phones in here, but in the news lately there's this castigation or this casting down of everything Christian now. Everyone who's a Christian is becoming almost a nuisance as they're saying to society, undesired, unnecessary and unwanted. This is the spirit of rage that gets into a society when godlessness begins to take over the thinking of the people.

And even the kings and even the rulers take counsel together saying, how can we destroy the influence of these people over our society? And they hatch a plot to do it. But yet the word of God says it's an empty plot, it's a vain thing. And the one who sits in heaven shall laugh at the futility of their pursuit.

How can you push God out of anywhere? How can you push somebody who's everywhere out of anywhere? They don't stop and reason it. He's omnipresent, which means he's everywhere. He's in this room, he's in the lobby, he's on the street, he's in your car.

There's nowhere you can go where God is not. So how do you push someone who's everywhere out of anywhere? It's as futile as trying to wave your hands to push the oxygen out of this room. It's not going to happen.

You can do it all night if you want, but you can't do it. You'll still be able to breathe when morning comes. You can try to push God out of society, but you can't because he's everywhere.

He's already everywhere, and you can't push him out of anywhere because he's already everywhere. In the book of Acts, chapter 12, we have a prime example of what Psalm 2 talks about. In chapter 12 of Acts, beginning at verse 1, it says, about that time, Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.

He stretched out his hand. I don't know what happens to people in authority, but they become intimidated by any kingdom that claims to have another king. Anybody that says we have a set of rules or laws or there's voices that we will obey that's not the voice of the secular authority of that particular time.

You can see that Herod decided, I'm going to try, as is written in Psalm 2, I'm going to vex the church. I'm going to set my hand against the people of God. And then he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

So it's not only an attempt to cause distress or diminish the faith of God's people, but it also included acts of violence. And we're not immune from this. We're not immune from acts of violence being perpetrated against the people of God.

It's happened all throughout history. It's happening in Nigeria today. For those who are reading the news, godless elements are coming into entire churches and slaughtering congregations.

It's happening in various parts throughout the world. And so Herod stretches out his hand and he kills James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.

Now it was during the days of unleavened bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four squads of soldiers, that's 16 soldiers, to keep him, intending him to bring him before the people after Passover. So you look at it, and the Passover was an incredible feast that was celebrated by the people of God of that time, the time when a spirit of death was going over the, in a sense, over the

nation of Israel.

But the people of God, because they had the blood of the lamb upon their doorposts, and the mantle of their door, were passed over by this angel of death. And God not only passed them over, but delivered them with a great deliverance, out of darkness and out of bondage. And so here is Herod, a king, who's taking one of the key players, in a sense, of the new charts that's being formed at this particular time, and he's taking them into captivity.

And in a sense, declaring, where is this God? We're going to hold you during the Passover, and we're going to bring you out as a display before the people when Passover is finished. We're going to, where is this God that you boast of? Where is this God that has delivered so many people in the history that you tell us is all powerful, this God that fights for those that have no might for themselves, and releases those that powers of the world have tried to take captive? You see, I'm going to take you captive, Peter, because you're one of the key leaders in this new church that's just been born, and I'm going to hold you captive, and I'm going to bring you out as a display after the Passover. And it's a type of darkness saying, here, I'm going to show you I have the power to bring into captivity, and God doesn't have the power to bring out of captivity what I take into captivity.

Why do the heathen rage? Why do the kings imagine something they can't perform? He who sits in the heavens shall laugh, and he shall have them in derision. It's amazing. He will so confound them and so confuse them.

Now, while all this is going on, there's a prayer meeting happening. It's not a big one. I don't know how many people are in it.

It's in a house. It can't be that big. It's in somebody's house, and the houses in those days were not as big as some of the houses are today.

So let's assume there might be 30 people there. Maybe that's even being generous. And they're praying, and they're praying, God set Peter free.

God set Peter free. God set Peter free. We love this man.

We want him to be free. We know your power. Just as we are praying for you tonight online, we're praying God set people free.

Set people free from wrong thinking about themselves, wrong thinking about God. Set them free from addiction. Set them free from depression.

Set them free from a sense or feeling of worthlessness. Set them free from captivity to drugs and alcohol and pornography and all these other things. Set them free.

That's why we gather. We're not a big group in the sanctuary, but I want to remind you there are probably close to 10,000 people will see this prayer meeting by tomorrow morning. And we are praying, and we are believing because God still answers prayer.

And the devil thinks he can hold this generation captive, but he's got another thought coming. He can't hold this generation captive because there's a people rising up who are starting to believe God again. There's voices being raised up saying, Lord, we believe.

You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. You do not change. We believe that you came to set the prisoner free.

We believe that you came to give sight to those who don't see a way forward. You came to show a resource to us that we don't naturally have. You came to heal us when we feel like there's no possible healing left in our lives, God.

We happen to believe that, not just for ourselves, but for others. We believe that as we come before your throne, you actually answer prayer because you told us whatever we ask for believing, we shall receive. You see, so tonight, this is why we pray.

This is why we pray for you. You know, I don't see your face. I'm looking at a green dot on the camera right now, but you see mine, and I'm in your room wherever you are right now.

Thank you, by the way, for inviting me there. But God is also in your room. And the devil tries to make you think that you'll never get out of your situation.

Nothing will ever change. He's got you locked in. Peter's in prison.

He's got 16 soldiers guarding him. The scripture says, when he was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping bound with two chains between two soldiers, and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. There is no natural way out.

Just like with many people listening tonight, you know, and I know there's no natural way for you to get out of the situation that you're in. Now, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him. Now, another word for angel is messenger.

Messenger from God, sent from God, stood by him. Just like we here tonight are standing by you. We're where you are tonight.

God has enabled us through the internet in our generation to come to your house. Isn't that amazing? Or your prison, wherever it is you are. We are with you right now.

We're in your room. You're not alone. We're with you.

And not only we are there, but God is with you. And so into this situation where the leader of the church of that time has been taken captive, 16 soldiers are guarding him. He's bound with two chains.

He's got a prison guard on either side of him, and probably the other 14 are standing at the door, making sure he doesn't escape. But a messenger from the Lord, an angel of the Lord, stood by him, and a light shone in the prison. You see, that's what begins to happen.

As I'm speaking to you tonight, as we're praying, as we've been worshiping, a little light starts falling on you, a little bit of illumination in your mind, a little spark of hope for the future. A messenger came, and with the messenger, light came. And suddenly, there's this spark in your heart that says, could it be true? Could I really be free? Could I really have a new life? Could the things that I thought were lost forever be recovered? Could I actually get out of this prison that the devil has put me in and is trying to convince me I'll never get out? Now, behold, the angel stood by him, and a light shone in the prison, and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, arise quickly.

And the chains fell off his hands. You see, this is the word to you tonight. Get up quickly.

From where you are. And let faith come into your heart, and as you begin to stand, the things that you thought you'd never get free from will just suddenly fall from your hands. Suddenly, your hands will have the power to lift up and say, God, if you really love me, if you really died for me, if you really have a purpose for my life, I yield my life to you.

I admit, oh, God, I can't save myself. I can't get out on my own. But I believe that you died in my place.

And I confess that you love me, and I confess that you're my Savior, and I invite you into my heart and into my life to be my Lord and Savior. And it says the chains fell off his hands. I did that years ago.

I know what this feels like, to get up in the morning and suddenly you feel light. The things that were so heavy, that were so binding you down, suddenly seem to have lost their power. They're gone because you turned to God.

And somebody was praying for me, by the way. Three ladies got a burden to pray for me, and they would meet weekly to pray for this police officer they heard about. They didn't know me, but they heard about this young police officer, and they believed that God had a plan for my life.

And so they began to intercede for me. Isn't that amazing? I never met all of them. I did meet one eventually, but they began to weekly meet to pray for me.

It wasn't long after that, the chains fell off my hands. And the things that had bound me all my life, like fear, for example, just melted away. And I became a new creation in Christ Jesus.

When Peter got up, the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, dress yourself and tie on your sandals. In other words, get ready.

I'm taking you somewhere. God says, listen, you've laid there long enough in that bed of affliction. You've laid there long enough in that place of depression.

Get yourself dressed. We're going somewhere. And so he did.

And he said, put on your clothing and follow me. So he went out and followed him and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but he thought he was seeing a vision. There is a moment in all of our lives where we wonder, could this be real? Is this really happening to me? Because you don't really see anything.

The whole kingdom is going on inside your heart. You're being led by a hand you can't see. You're being changed by a power that you can't necessarily just touch physically, but it's touching you.

We heard that tonight. You might be distant from God, but he's pursuing you. He's coming after you.

He's come into your room. He's come to get you. And he followed him and did not know that it was real.

Thought he was seeing a vision. But when they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord. And they went out and went down the street.

And immediately the angel departed from him. There was a church in the last book of the Bible called Philadelphia. And there were people with just a little bit of strength.

You know, and Jesus sent a word to this church. And he said, you only have a little strength. And you've tried to keep my word and you've not denied who I am.

And he said, I'm going to set a door before you that no one can close. Isn't that amazing? This is a promise that God makes to you tonight. Whoever it is listening to this message and these songs and these prayers, God's saying, I'm putting a door in front of you that no one can close it.

And all you have to do is get up and walk through that door. It's a door that supernaturally opens. God puts it there.

And it's a door that will lead you to where God wants you to go. And he told the people of Philadelphia, if you'll go through that door, he said, I'll promise I'll make you a pillar in the house of God. In other words, I'll give you strength to stand.

The devil won't be able to knock you down anymore. You'll be among my people and you'll be among those who stand. Now, when Peter had come to himself, he said, now I know for certain the Lord has sent his angel and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.

So when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. Hallelujah. He went to a prayer meeting.

Isn't that amazing? All that happens to him. It starts with people praying. And then the miracle happens on the other side.

And God leads him to a prayer meeting. God takes him to a place where people are praying. And that's what he's going to do for somebody tonight.

He's going to take you out of where you are. And he's going to take you to where people are praying. And you're going to become part of the kingdom of God moving in the earth.

Powers of hell thought they could hold you, but they can't, because we're praying for you tonight. Let it get into your heart tonight. The devil can't hold you.

He thinks he can, but he can't, because we have prayed for you. And now you're going to open your mouth and you're going to pray for yourself. And then you're going to put on your sandals, and then you're going to put on your coat, and you're going to say, Lord, lead me.

And when you begin to walk with him, doors are going to start opening to you that are opened by God himself. You don't have to open them. God will open those doors.

And he's going to lead you to a place where people are praying, and you're going to start praying too. And you're going to fight back, and you're going to give the devil a black eye. You're going to fight this spiritual warfare in our generation, because God has a plan for your life.

God has a plan for your life. You can't stay captivated any longer. A message has come to you tonight.

Get up, get dressed, start walking with God, and you watch what God will begin to do in your life. And we believe it, because we know that God answers prayer. We believe it because somebody prayed for us.

That's why we're here tonight. We came to this prayer meeting because somebody prayed for us. There are young people here tonight.

Their moms and dads prayed for them, and because they did, they're here. All of us are here because somebody prayed for us. That's why we're at the prayer meeting.

That's why we pray for you. That's why we believe God's going to set you free, because we believe that God answers prayer, and he answers it supernaturally. He answers it powerfully.

We don't have to be fancy in our prayers. We just have to believe that when we pray, God will answer us. And we pray for you.

And so tonight, I want you to take a step of faith, and maybe for the first time in a long time, just utter your first prayer of faith. Even if it's just, Jesus, I believe what I'm hearing is true. I believe it, God.

I believe that I can be free. I believe that you died on the cross, and you paid the price for everything that separates me from the life that God has for me, and from a relationship with God himself. I believe that I have a future.

I believe that you have a divine plan for my life. And tonight, I'm going to pray, and then tomorrow morning, I'm going to put on my shoes, and I'm going to put on my clothes, and I'm going to walk out my door and say, God, lead me. God, lead me to where you want me to go.

God, lead me to what you want me to be. God, lead me to the freedom that you bought for me on the cross, and make my life a blessing to you and a testimony of your glory in the earth. I want you to pray these simple words with me tonight.

Would you lift your voice, and I'm going to lead you in a prayer, and you pray this prayer with me this evening. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for coming to get me in my darkened place.

Thank you for shining light into my darkened mind. Thank you for bringing healing into my wounded heart. Thank you for giving me a future and a purpose and a hope.

Thank you for miracles. I believe I will see miracles in my life of freedom and healing and deliverance. Jesus Christ, tonight I open my heart to you, and I invite you to come into my life to be my Lord, my Savior, and my God.

I will live for you all the days of my life, and I will follow you where you lead me. I believe that tonight I am saved. I'm free.

I'm a new creation because of Jesus Christ. I'm going to follow Jesus for the rest of my days. If you prayed that tonight, text the word DECIDED to 51,000.

Just go ahead and do that as a step of faith. DECIDED to 51,000. Tell your friends to come in and pray with us on Wednesday night because God is answering prayer.

This might be the last call before Christ returns. I don't know. I think the signs are starting to show the nearness of his return, but he's still stretching his hand out.

His mercy and power are still available. Tell your friends, tell your addicted friends, your depressed friends, your discouraged friends, everyone you meet, tell them to come in and pray. Actually, bring them to your house.

Pray together and believe God for miracles. Believe God for his Holy Spirit to come and give you the strength that you need now. Join with us on Wednesday night and pray because God is answering prayer all over the world.

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