



## “When It’s All On The Line”

*“It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. <sup>2</sup> He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. <sup>3</sup> When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.” Acts 12:1-5 (NIV)*

In a period of about 7 years, the Church went from being in great favor to becoming the object of severe persecution.

There are 2 major points for us in today’s passage:

- I. Life is not “fair” but God is Sovereign! (See Mark 9:2)
  - Sovereignty is a conviction that God controls all things according to His perfect will.
- II. Earnest prayer still moves the hand of God. (see vs. 5)
  - Earnest prayer, in Greek, is “ektenos”, a definition of which is “stretched out.” (see Luke 22:44)
  - Earnest prayer is not a formula but a passionate expression.
  - Earnest prayer can change the seemingly impossible things of life!

“When it’s all on the line”...

... wonderful answers and victories may come

... earthly loss but heavenly gain!

... Shattered faith

... confusion and compromise

... refocusing on what really matters

Obedience to our calling to serve God by making disciples and advancing the mission of the Church remains paramount despite life’s great obstacles and challenges.

### Small Group Questions

1. Describe a time in your life when things were “all on the line” for you.
2. Why is earnest prayer so difficult to sustain for most of us? What do you do in order to not lose your passion to pray?
3. Do you know of any situations right now that require “earnest prayer” as we’ve seen it in this passage and talked about it today?
4. Can you give an illustration of a time when you engaged in earnest prayer and saw the Lord provide an answer or solution to the situation?
5. Describe sovereignty as you understand it and how it affects your ability to trust God no matter what.