

Rhoda the Believer
(Lesser Known Characters)
Հոովդէ՛ Հաւատացեալը
(Ոչ Հանրածանօթ Անձնաւորութիւններ)

Acts 12:12-16

During the last months, we covered 1st Thessalonians. I hope you can visit those 11 sermons and study them again. The letter challenged me as a pastor, and I pray that it challenged you too.

During the summer weeks and before Rally Sunday, I would like to preach sermons about Biblical characters who are not necessarily well known. Some of those characters have set great examples in faith. Yet the others have not lived exemplary lives and have made some bad choices. The Bible did not delete those names. In fact, we can learn how **not** to make the choices which will ruin our walk with the Lord.

This morning I'll take a lesser-known Biblical character namely **Rhoda**. Do you know Rhoda?

Let me give a short background. Jesus ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit came down on the 120 who were in the Upper Room. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit; they were on fire for the Lord. King Herod was not too happy with the spread of the Christianity.

We read in Acts 12:

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.
(Acts 12:1-3 ESV)

Herod arrested and killed James the son of Zebedee. He was becoming more popular with the Jews. Thus he arrested Peter, the head of the disciples, and put him in jail. We read:

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (Acts 12:5 ESV)

The believers were in constant prayer. They were devastated by the death of James. Now they were thinking Peter was going to be next. The angel of the Lord appeared to Peter and rescued him from his chains. The doors of the prison opened and Peter walked out of the jail (Acts 12:6-11). The believers were still in prayer. They wanted to see a miracle. On the one hand, they were mourning the loss of James who was killed by Herod. They did not want to lose Peter as well. Luke, the author of Acts says, “**but earnest prayer for (Peter) was made to God by the church.**”

Some observations:

-The Whole Church Praying

Please notice, the whole church was praying... In Acts 4:4 we read the number of the believers kept adding (It was 5000). Most likely they were meeting in different homes. We read in verse 12 that many were praying in the house of Mary, the mother of John-Mark. (*Barnabas' sister (Mary's) son John, so called Mark is the same person who later joined Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey.*)

Illustration: Sevan and I care for and support a young lady from the Bay Area. She is preparing to become a missionary to places I cannot reveal. She just sent me a letter explaining her life at this place which is training school for missionaries. One of the rooms is called Prayer Room. This is the way she describes it:

This is the prayer room where we spend 4 hours a day from 6-10pm for corporate intercession (2 hours) and study/personal prayer time (2 hours). Corporately, we pray for revival in the global church and harvest in the Middle East, Asia, America, and the world! What's been exciting is that our cohort has had the opportunity to lead these times, so we have been growing in musicianship and prayer leadership.

-God answers prayer in His time.

Peter himself was astonished how God helped him get out of prison. He thought this was a vision, a dream. When Peter came through several doors, eventually the angel left him. We read:

When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” (Acts 12:11 ESV)

What was the next move for Peter? He rushed to the house of Mary where the believers would usually gather. It was night; he needed a shelter.

When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. (Acts 12:12 ESV)

Peter arrives to this house and knocks the door. **We read that a servant girl called Rhoda (which means rose) comes to open the door.** She does not open the door. She recognizes Peter’s voice and gets excited. Instead of opening the door, she runs inside to inform the believers that the answer of their prayer has been granted. Do they believe her? They do not believe in her. (A servant girl’s message?)

Luke says:

“You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. (Acts 12:15-16 ESV)

What can we learn from this event, from **Rhoda**?

1. Rhoda was not just a “slave” girl serving and cleaning. Who is a servant girl in the Middle East? Nobody, no one cares about a servant girl. It is amazing that Luke mentions her name Rhoda, the rose...

She was part of the prayer group. It seems she was a believer in Jesus Christ. It seems she had heard Peter often. It seems she had paid attention to Peter’s

sermons. It seems she knew his voice. **She was not just simply a servant of the house. She was servant of the Lord.**

Illustration: When I was a pastor in Beirut at the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church, the congregation met in a school called Torossian School. The school hired a cleaning lady from Ghana, her name was Mary. She was a dedicated Christian. She cleaned the school when no one was there in the afternoons. I heard her voice singing Hallelujahs and Christian songs all afternoon. She prayed in every room so that God would touch every child. One day I was in a pain, she came to our house, laid hands on me and prayed with her whole heart. She was the new “Rhoda”.

Not all of us are called to be pastors. Not all of us are called to be musicians. Not all of us are called to serve the Lord in a way people can see. **Rhoda is a servant girl.** **Mary**, the mother of John-Mark had a role. She had a big **house open** to all for gathering and prayer. Yet, the humble servant Rhoda became the messenger to inform the believers of God’s miracle.

Each of us has a role. Some are in the front, and some are backstage.

2. Rhoda was confident and persistent.

They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” 12:15

Rhoda was a servant girl. Most likely, she was not even a Jewish girl, a peasant girl from Cyprus or Lebanon? She stood strong in what she heard. **You know we need this characteristic. If you know the truth, we should not compromise by following others’ opinions.** Rhoda was humiliated, but she did not care. If you have experienced God’s miracle in your life, His lavish love, an answer to prayer, a blessing, share it with others. Even if they don’t believe in what you say, or make fun of you, stay firm in your belief.

Do you stay firm in your belief about God’s truth? The world around us can think we have lost our mind. Can you stay firm in your beliefs?

3. Rhoda got too excited and forgot her main task

Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. (Acts 12:14 ESV)

Rhoda's first job was to answer the door, take Peter into a safer place. Her second job was to go and tell everyone. She got too excited and did not open the door.

Emotions are gifts from God, but they need to be kept under the control of God.

Don't let your emotions lead you in making important decisions. It is dangerous to obey feelings.

Duty remains the same, whether my heart is beating like a sledge-hammer, or whether 'my bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne.' Whether I am sad or glad, the door that God has given me to watch has to be opened and shut by me. And whether I am a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, like Rhoda in Mary's, or have an office that people think larger and more important, the imperativeness of my duties is equally independent of my momentary emotions and circumstances. Remember, then, that duty remains while feeling fluctuates, and that, sorrowful or joyful, we have still the same Lord to serve and the same crown to win.¹

4. Prayers have been Answered

Rhoda, the slave girl, heard Peter's voice and experienced God's miracle. However, the prayerful people who had been praying for days had difficulty believing that their prayer could be answered.

Application:

1. The church prayed together. That is one of my goals, to encourage PACC to become praying church.
2. God will answer in His own time and in His own way.

3. Each of us is called to be part of the praying group. It is not just Badveli's job to pray, it is all of us together. Be ready to face people who will not believe prayer. Continue praying.

4. Find your role in the Kingdom of God.

Let us approach the Table that the LORD has prepared for us.

1 <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/12-13.htm>. MacLaren Expositions Of Holy Scripture