

What do do after we have prayed

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[0:00] Just to make this point, usually we have one passage of scripture which we look at and then! the next week look at the following passage of scripture. So today is a little bit different! because we're looking at a subject. The subject is prayer and the particular angle on the subject is what do we do at the end of a week of prayer such as we've had. So I'll just recap what we talked about last time. We said, why should we pray? Why set aside a special week to pray together as a Christian church in Brighton? Why have a special time? Why be together? And we tried to answer that by thinking together about what prayer is. Roughly speaking, it's talking to God, but there's more to it than that. So we asked, why pray? Is it a right, a good thing, a meaningful thing, a valuable thing, or is it just fairly pointless? And we got to the answer that the sovereign personal God amazingly invites his people to be aligned with him in his ways and to be in on the act of prayer, even as he is in on the act by praying. The things that he's going to do, he wants us to be part of them as we pray, and he has, even as he has revealed his plans and purposes to us. So the definition of prayer is in itself as an invitation to be part of it. So Christian prayer is the privilege of being brought in on the processes, the plans, and the purposes of the Almighty. Brought within the implementation, the working out of those plans, even within, you could almost say, even within the Holy Trinity,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray to God as our Heavenly Father through the ministry and merit of Jesus Christ in the influence of the Holy Spirit. And we come in a father-child relationship. Jesus said, didn't he, which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? And he says, you, even though you're evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will the Heavenly Father give good gifts to his children? Prayer, we come in repentance, and we come in faith. And we are involved with the actual fulfilment of the mysteriously revealed will of God. And this is just such a superlatively high privilege to be part of the fulfilment of God's saving plan on earth. So that was the sort of thing we thought about last week as an encouragement to prayer and an invitation to prayer. And who wouldn't want to be part of that? Who wouldn't want to be part of that? So I'd like us to think, what do we do after we've prayed? So I hope this is, I guess this is a little bit more fragmented, but I'll try and make it make spiritual sense. In other words, okay, we've had a week of prayer.

And does that mean, right, that's it, finish that, we can just, we've done everything that God requires. Or to put it very crudely, now that we've handed matters over to him, shall we now do nothing and leave it all to him? You might think that's a bit of a daft idea, but in 1786, William Carey suggested action to take the gospel to the distant nations. And he was at a meeting, apparently, where a certain Dr. Ryland was. And William Carey said, we ought to do something. And Dr.

[3:43] Ryland, in the, this is what it says on the internet, as soon as Dr. Ryland could command sufficient composure to reply. He exclaimed, young man, sit down. When God is pleased to convert the heathen world, he will do it without your help or mine. So he's always saying, you don't do anything, you pray, it would be blasphemous to try and do anything. So I'd like to ask, what do we do? And I'll give you actually four answers, but one of them is only a sentence.

First answer, do nothing. Do nothing and perhaps even completely forget we've had a week of prayer. Answer number one. Answer number two, wait in expectation that God will do something. That's answer number two. Think about that. Number three, act in faith. And number four, I'll hold on to until we get to number four. I'll tell you about that one later. So basically we've got those three possible answers that we'll think of. What do we do after a week of prayer? Answer one is nothing. Answer two is wait. Answer three is do something. Okay, so we'll just think about under those three headings. But before we get to that, the first question we need to ask is, did we pray?

So let's have a little bit of that. The first question is, did we pray? Now what is prayer? Prayer is coming in faith to the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, aligned by grace with the purposes of God. So when I say aligned by grace, I mean there is an expectation that people who pray will mentally be thinking about God and his purposes and will emotionally be caught up with God and his purposes. And in terms of the way they live their lives and everything else about them, they will want to be aligned with the purposes of God. So that's put a certain demandingness on the people who pray. And as I shall try and say, not all prayers are prayers. Not every time that people come to God and say loads of stuff does God say, well that was prayer. Sometimes he says that was just, I don't know what that was, just a load of talk. So it's a proper question. Did we pray?

Pray? So here's some answers to that. So here's one answer. Oh dear, I completely forgot it was the week of prayer. I feel quite embarrassed about it. Or you might say, well actually, I was so sorry, I was ill that week. Or I was overwhelmed by work. Or the kids were just awful and I couldn't get out. [6:20] To which I'm going to say, okay, you forgot to pray. You weren't able to be part of it. It's never too late to pray. Never too late to pray. There's a big sheet here. If you missed that, photograph that on your phone and you could take it home and pray. So never too late to pray. And you might say, well actually, I'm always praying. I just couldn't make it that particular week in any particular way. But the things that you were praying for are always on my heart and mind. I say amen to that.

Turn from evil, says Peter, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. God's always listening for the prayers of his people. It doesn't have to be a special week. We can have a special week. But all the time, God's ears are open to the cries of his people. And it is still what the Bible would say, the day, the period, the age of grace. Meaning, we haven't got to the day of judgment yet. This is the time where God is patient, willing for sinners to come to him, willing for prayers to be made. And we certainly haven't finished praying. So there's answer to number one. I'm so sorry I forgot. Okay, well we just pray and we keep on praying.

Answer number two. And I preface this by saying again, I don't think the Bible will let me say that every set of words addressed to him, God will promise to hear them. James, and I'm not sure that I've got this reference a little bit further on, I'll tell you what James says. This is going to go down over here. I might be repeating myself. I can't remember whether I put this in later as well. But James says, when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive any strength from the Lord. He's a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. So there are prayers that are just prayed and not really lived, not really where you're at. You're sort of in several different places in your life and prayer is just one incidental part of it. And the Bible doesn't give any encouragement that God hears prayers like that.

It specifically says, that man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. God. Isaiah, you remember in, I think it's in chapter one, condemns the people in his generation and he says, even though you spread out your hands to pray, I will not listen because your hands are full of blood. A severely inconsistent life. God says, I'm not going to hear that sort of prayer. And you remember Jesus with the Pharisees. He says, don't pray like the Pharisees.

They're just praying to show off. I won't hear that sort of prayer. So here's a second answer. And this is, I thought a lot about this. This is a bit harsh actually, but I think it needs to be said. So here is somebody who says in their heart, perhaps they wouldn't say it out loud. To be honest, I couldn't be bothered to pray. To be honest, I couldn't be bothered to pray. I had better things to do and prayer is a big waste of time. And I want to say that that is a disturbingly revealing answer. Because what it's saying is, God made promises about prayer, but I just don't believe them. God invites people to prayer, but I couldn't be bothered to take them to pray. God says, this is all about my kingdom, my

glory. That's what I want you to be praying about. And somebody who says, I can't be bothered to pray, is saying, I'm not actually concerned about the kingdom of God. And it might even be saying, I don't think

[10:49] God's that interested in Calvary Church, and stuff like that. Well, these are revealing thoughts. And what they're actually saying is, you can't be that bothered about God. And this would be extremely blunt about this. On the day of judgment, what makes you think God will be bothered about you? Honestly, if you can't be bothered about God, what on earth makes you think on the day of judgment, he'll be bothered about you? Jesus once said, whoever is ashamed of me in my words in this day, in this generation, I will be ashamed of him before my Father in heaven when I come. And honestly, it's a revealing thing, isn't it? If you can't be bothered, how do you expect God to be bothered about you? That was answer number two. I hope it doesn't apply to anybody, but I need to say it. Answer number three. I did pray. I couldn't come to all the meetings. And I am vexed by my sins. I constantly need God's forgiveness.

Constantly need the help of the Holy Spirit. I came to pray. Would God hear prayers like that? Did I pray? To which I think the right response from the Bible is, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Jesus tells the story of the man who came, the two men who came to pray, actually, came to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, who wasn't troubled like this, who says, I thank you, God, I'm a really good guy. And the other person who says, I'm coming to you, Lord. Sorry, that's going to fall. I'm coming to you. God have mercy on me, Lord. And Jesus says, the person who went home right with God, favoured by God, God was with that person, was the second one. So I want to encourage the humble, penitent, praying Christian. Those are the prayers that God hears. And I want to say many of us did come to pray on the mornings and the evenings. Wednesday, which is our normal prayer night, we had a good number of people. And it was good to be together. It was good to pray. The times we had, we weren't just sort of stuck for anything to say and nobody prayed and it was all rather embarrassing. We prayed. And God enabled us to bring to him the matters that are concerning us the matters about his kingdom. We prayed on Monday for the spread of his word. We prayed for fruit in his kingdom. We're fruit from the Lord Jesus. We prayed for workers in his harvest.

We prayed for the people of God. We prayed for the future. And I think we can honestly say, we prayed. We prayed as sinners saved by grace. We prayed as sinners saved by grace. But we prayed with a genuine measure of faith in God's promises. We prayed genuinely turning to him in repentance.

We prayed genuinely grateful for what he's done in the past and genuinely depending on him rather than ourselves. I think we can say we prayed. First question, did we pray? And I believe that the honest answer is, yes, we did.

We prayed. So that was important to get that straight, first of all. So what do we do after we've prayed? So here's some three possible answers to that.

[14:48] Nothing. And I added, and just forget it, as if it never happened. I'll just take a positive spin on that, first of all.

Well, there are surely some cases where we pray, and there is nothing else we can do. So I'm just thinking we pray, we're told to pray for our leaders, aren't we? What can we do?

Go around and see them? Well, we can't do that. I suppose we could write them a letter. But there's not a lot we can do. We pray for our leaders. When Daniel prayed for the return from exile, I was struggling to think, did he do anything?

I can't think he did. He just kept on praying. But so, positively, there's some sense in which there's nothing else we can do. But I think to say nothing and then forget as if it never happened is a deeply unsatisfactory answer, actually.

Doing nothing is, there are a few cases where that's all you can do. I'm thinking of the parable of the talents.

[15:53] Do you remember the story of the talents hidden in the ground? Let me just look it up so I can have it in front of my eye. It's in Matthew 25, where the master gives, he's going on a journey, he gives his servants money.

According to their ability, he gives them the potential that this money represents. And then he leaves them and comes back to see what they've done. And they do different things with the different amounts of money.

But there's one of them who does nothing. And he says in Matthew 25, 24, the man who received one talent came.

The master, he said, I knew you were a hard man. Harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed, I was afraid and I went out and I hid your talent in the ground and I just got it back.

I've done nothing with it apart from hide it and keep it. He did nothing. And in this parable, there's a surprisingly negative view of doing nothing in this case because the master says, you wicked, lazy servant.

[17:05] So you knew I harvest where I had not sown, gathered where I had not scattered seed. Well, at least you should have done something with it. But you are worthless, verse 30, throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So as doing nothing is a dangerous thing in the kingdom, failure to invest in heavenly things, given the investment climate, given the possibilities of this current age, seen by God as a very wicked thing.

That's surprising, isn't it? So I'm going to be quite, I want to distance myself, I hope we would want to distance ourselves from the idea of simply doing nothing and forgetting all about it.

Completely forgetting? Well, yeah, we do forget things, don't we? I can't always remember people's names. And some people forget their wedding anniversaries and birthdays, even though they do consider them important.

But God values not just a one-off prayer, there are some prayers that are one-off, but one-off and forget as if it had never happened.

[18:21] Actually, God values persistence in prayer. Did you notice that in the reading that Maria read? The person who persists and comes back, ask, meaning, ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on looking, knock and keep on knocking.

Those are the sort of prayers that God answers. So just doing nothing and forgetting is not the way. And God has attached immensely strong promises to prayer.

And it would be deeply disrespectful to cynically treat those promises as empty. So John 15, 7, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask what you wish and it will be given you.

It's a very comprehensive and powerful promise. If you're aligned with me, abiding in me, you ask stuff, it will be given you. John 15, 16, said to the apostles, obviously, I chose you to bear fruit and the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

You're going to bear fruit but you do it through praying and you will get answers to prayer. And chapter 16, I haven't put the verse, have I? Until now, you have not asked for anything in my name.

[19:38] Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete. So there are these powerful promises attached to prayer. Did you notice in the 1 Kings 18, it's about answering.

The God who answers, that's God. And they say to Baal, answer, and there's no answer. And then Elijah prays, answer me. And God answers.

So I think if you have a prayer answering God, the idea of praying and then forgetting about it just seems enormously disrespectful. So let's take answer number one, we do nothing, completely forget it.

Let's distance ourselves from that. That's not a, in the way I've described it, it's not an adequate answer. Number two, simply wait in expectation.

Simply wait in expectation. So I think there's some good things about this answer. Whoops. There's some good things about this answer. Isaiah 40 talks about waiting on the Lord.

[20:46] Isaiah 40 says, those who wait upon the Lord or wait for the Lord, or perhaps your translation would be trust in the Lord or hope in the Lord, will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. So, they wait. So there's a right sense of waiting.

There's a verse in the prophet Habakkuk where he says, having made a complaint to God, he says, I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. I will look to see what he will say to me. So Habakkuk says, I've prayed. Right, I'm going to wait and see what the answer is. I think as a church, we have prayed and there's a sense that we now start looking to see what the answer will be.

In the story that Mark read to us about Elijah, do you remember at the end he prays?

[22:03] He's actually praying for rain, isn't he? And he says, go and look out to sea. Can you see an answer coming? And there's nothing there.

And he says, okay, and he prays. And he goes back and says, can you see anything out to sea? Anything, clouds, anything like that? No. And then the seventh time he goes, I can see a little tiny cloud as big as a man's hand rising out of the sea.

And Elijah says, right, that's it, get ready, umbrellas out, waterproof clothing on, because it's jolly well going to rain. So there's a waiting and looking. And I want to encourage us we've prayed.

We're going to continue to pray. But there's a sense that having prayed, we can be looking. Now then, what will God do? What's the answer that we will get?

How will he respond to the issues that we've laid before him, the needs we've laid before him? Let me just be quite clear about needs.

[23:05] We have three elders. One elder has a cancer diagnosis and originally that would give him another 18 months to live. This elder is looking at the calendar and thinking in the next year, couple of years, I ought to be stepping back.

Don't want to leave Ben all by himself trying to enlarge the church and build the church. We've got churches that we're praying for. Two, if we're very blunt, are on the verge of extinction.

And if you look in our city, we've got tens of thousands of people who don't have near them witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I think those are needs and situations we should be concerned for.

And if we can't pray about those things, I don't know what we can pray about. We've prayed. We will continue to pray. And we want to look to the Lord. What will the answer be?

There's dangers of going ahead without waiting. 1 Samuel 13 is when Saul, King Saul, was told to wait, but he got ahead of himself and he started offering sacrifice when he was told to wait for Samuel to do it.

[24:29] So there's dangers of going ahead without waiting. There's certainly dangers of going ahead without praying. So there's an example in Joshua 9 of the Gibeonites.

Do you remember this story? Joshua was told make no treaty with nearby tribes. You shouldn't be at peace with them.

And there was a nearby tribe called the Gibeonites. They wanted to be in a treaty. They would be safe if they got in a treaty. And what they did was they disguised themselves and they disguised their transport.

They put moldy bread in their bags and moldy old cheese in their bags and manky water in their water bottles. And they went round the corner and they said, oh, we've come from miles away. Oh, it's taken us so long to get here. Can we have a treaty with you? And it says, Joshua and his lot made a decision.

[25:35] Let me quote it to you exactly. They said, where are you? Who are you? Where do you come from? And they said, oh, miles away. You can easily make a treaty with us. It's not a problem for you.

And it says in 9.14, the men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. Yeah? They took a look at the situation but they didn't ask the Lord.

So there's danger of going ahead without praying. Wait and see what God will do. So we prayed about the spread of his word and the sense we can wait and see.

Now what will God do for the spreading of his word? It would be wonderful if God's word spread so that in this retirement home there's a Bible study which there wasn't two years ago and there's another Bible study over here.

And in this place of work there's a Christian union where people are talking about the Lord and in this place where it was so hostile to the Lord a few people are getting together to pray and talk about the Lord. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the word of God was spreading like this?

[26:43] And so we prayed about that and we prayed about fruit and wouldn't it be wonderful when the seed is sown for it not just to go dead and get choked but to pop up and bear fruit some what is it thirtyfold some sixtyfold some a hundredfold.

We've prayed about that. Let's see what God will do. We prayed about laborers in the harvest. We're told to pray send laborers into the harvest. We've asked the Lord things need doing people are needed to do it.

Will you provide such people? We've been thankful for what God has provided in our church here in answer to prayer over recent years and indeed over past years.

We're praying Lord there is a need that we can see coming up. Let's see what God will do about that. We've prayed. We wait in expectation. We've prayed about the people of God.

Some people have got deep problems. We ask Lord liberate them from those. Let's see a new thing happening. We've prayed about the people of God and we've prayed about the future.

[27:53] There's a song. I know who holds the future. You'll guide me with his hand. With God things don't just happen. Everything by him is planned.

So as I face tomorrow with its problems large and small I'll trust the God of miracles. Give to him my all. God enabled us to lay before him a number of things about the future.

They're in his hands. We wait and see. What will he do? That's not the only answer. It's not the only answer to say, sit back and wait now. Would you like to turn to Exodus 14?

I'm struck by this one. Exodus 14. This is when the Israelites were escaping from Egypt and they've got out but they're now sort of on the loose.

They haven't yet crossed the Red Sea. The Red Sea is in front of them and the army of Pharaoh has decided to chase after them and everything is panic and chaos.

[29:05] Exodus 14 verse 11. Well verse 10. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord and they said to Moses this is sarcasm this was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us into the desert to die what have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt didn't we say to you in Egypt leave us alone let us serve the Egyptians it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians and die in the desert and Moses answered the people do not be afraid just wait stand firm and you will see the salvation the Lord will bring to you today the Egyptians you see today you'll never see again the Lord will fight for you you need only stand still so he says okay just wait stand still no I haven't looked this up or thought about!

it but it seems interesting verse 15 the Lord said to Moses why are you crying out to me tell the Israelites to move on raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground and I'm just wondering whether there's a progress there that Moses said just step calm down wait and see what God will do!

God says to Moses move on there's a time to stop praying and to move on why are you crying to me tell the Israelites to move on and just before we finish thinking about this answer let me say that prayer very often takes place in the rhythm of life so although we've had a week of prayer and we won't most likely have a week of prayer for another for some months to come but generally speaking prayer and action are sort of hand in hand through the course even of a day so I'm thinking that Jesus seemed to imply that daily prayer was part of daily life so as he says in the prayer that he taught us give us this day our daily bread so do you follow that seems to me to say that's for today and tomorrow you'll pray that again and then the next day you don't say it's nearly October Lord will you give us the bread for October or 2020 just give us the bread for today there seems to be a rhythm I'm praying and then I'm working and I'm praying and I'm working and as the day goes by and as the days go by that's the way it is presumably Jesus assumed that as you prayed give us today our daily bread that there would be a farmer growing the wheat and there would be somebody chopping it down in due season and there would certainly be somebody in the home grinding it and there would certainly be somebody whatever you do to bread kneading and putting it in the oven and baking it and so there's a process that's going on along with prayer and it isn't we have a week of prayer and then we have a week of cooking and we have a week of prayer it sort of goes on together Jesus mixed!

prayer in with his other activities Luke chapter 3 it's quite striking Luke chapter 3 verse 21 and what Luke does he picks up a number of incidents that we will know about we know these things happened but he will say with each of these incidents actually Jesus was praying when this happened the other gospel writers don't necessarily tell us that so Luke 3 21 when all the people were being baptized Jesus was baptized too well we knew that and as he was praying heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove the other gospels don't tell us that he was doing stuff he was praying all melded can I say that word together 5 16 says the news about him spread all the more the crowds of people came to hear him and be healed of their sicknesses so he's doing lots of stuff but Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed [33:43] I didn't know that he often said okay I'm being very busy I'm just going to stop for a bit and I'm going to go and I need to pray and I'll come back and be busy so there's a sort of rhythm of praying and action if the Lord Jesus needed that how right it is for us does that make sense yeah Luke 6 12 this is the choosing the apostles now we know that he chose the apostles Luke 6 12 one of those days Jesus went out to a mountain side to pray and spent the night praying to God when morning came he called his disciples to him and chose 12 of them I'm fascinated to know what Jesus prayed how did he pray what did he say did he say heavenly father I'm thinking about that chap Peter he's rather impulsive do you think he's the right guy what do you see of his potential I see potential in him you know what did he pray but he spent all night praying about these people

Lord I can see the problems they're going to run into there's going to be a time when I'm walking on water and if I choose Peter he'll be there and he's going to sink what should we do about that and anyway I'm speculating but he Jesus prayed 918 918 is that the right one no it's 928 put the wrong no 918 918 was right 918 was right so this is where Jesus says who do the crowds say that I am we knew he said that but in Luke he says once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him he asked them who do the crowds say that I am this conversation Jesus was praying and his disciples interrupted him and he says who do the crowds say that I am he was praying 928 this is the mount of transfiguration well we knew about that we knew there was a mount of transfiguration

Jesus was sort of his glory was revealed temporarily momentarily but it says 928 about eight days after Jesus said this he took Peter John and James with him up on the mountain to pray and as he was praying the appearance of his face was changed we didn't know that he was praying well there's various texts like this 11 verse 4 of course one day Jesus was praying in a certain place when he had finished one of his disciples said to him Lord teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples they asked to be taught to pray because they overheard Jesus praying he did stuff he prayed he did stuff he prayed he didn't just wait a beautiful intertwining of prayer and faith and action which is going to lead us on to the next thing so brothers and sisters we've prayed as a church I believe we've prayed and we look what will the

Lord do in answer to these prayers And we want to keep on praying and intertwine action and prayer like our Saviour did a rhythm of waiting and working Answer number three act in faith so shall we act in faith I think there's something quite profound here about the way the heavenly father what his intention is towards the people that he saves his intention is to bring us into a relationship with him where we share with him in understanding his heart and mind and being involved in his business do you remember the Lord Jesus when he was a little child when they went off on that trip to Jerusalem and he got lost on the way back and they said where is he I thought he was with you and he said they found him in the temple and he said didn't you know

I would be about my father's business because that's what a son does a son is in his father's business and God brings us as his sons and daughters into his business I've got an example here I think it's worth looking at Acts chapter 10 verse 2 it's about bringing people in on the action let me try and depict it as succinctly as I can Acts 10 verse 2 this is about Cornelius the centurion he and his family were devout and God fearing Acts 10 2 he gave generously to those in need and he prayed to God regularly so he's a man of prayer and he has three in the afternoon verse 3 a vision an angel of God who says to him

[39:06] Cornelius and Cornelius says what is it Lord and the angel said your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God now send men to Joppa to bring back a man called Simon called Peter he is staying with Simon the tanner in a house by the sea so the angel comes to Cornelius and says you need Peter you need to go and get Peter they were praying he was praying and he says you need to get Peter so off we go now to find out about Peter so in Acts 10 verse 9 Peter himself is praying about noon the following day as these messengers were on their journey Peter went up on the roof to pray and he has this vision of a sheet thing full of unclean animals and the voice verse 13 says get up Peter kill and eat and Peter says no it's not kosher I couldn't eat that stuff and the Lord says do not call anything impure that God has made clean and this happens three times so interestingly

God sends an angel to Cornelius and then God speaks in a vision to Peter so God is well able to communicate to these people in that way but the significance of it is that he wants Peter and Cornelius to get together so Peter is wondering about the meaning of the vision and the visitors arrive and they say we want you to come to this Italian this Cornelius the centurion and so Peter says I understand I need to go so off he goes to Caesarea that's in verse 24 and Cornelius explains in verse 30 that he was praying and the prayer said you need to get Peter here and then in verse 34 Peter speaks and he explains the good news of Jesus Christ he explains that in sufficient length and they become believers so it's a wonderful story but the bit I'm trying to get at is why don't you think the angel just told

Cornelius straight away why don't you think the angel so there's Cornelius praying and the angel says to Cornelius get Peter why doesn't the angel say I can explain the gospel to you I could tell you this about Jesus Jesus of Nazareth I could tell you that save all the messing about wouldn't it but that's not the way God does it he wants to do it through Peter he wants Peter to get it into his head about how God loves the Gentiles and he wants Peter to go and he wants Peter to be involved in spreading this message he wants human Peter to be part of the action and you say God we prayed why doesn't God just save people he could do that bang bang bang bang zap zap zap but actually God says well I want you to be involved with this I'm not going to go zap zap zap I'm going to go conversation conversation conversation so

God brings us into the act not only in praying but in doing and he might even say that Peter found himself the answer to his own prayer I don't know what he was praying about up on the roof Lord will you save these unclean Italians was he praying that and God says okay well you can go and be part of that we may even find that God sends us in answer to the prayers we prayed this past week so what do we do do we act and I think action is part of our response to a week of prayer I've got a couple of sub headings so number one to act in wise faith and I want to bring in here the thought of wisdom wisdom is a proper object of prayer so James says this is the quote that I wasn't sure I had the end bit here is about the prayers that

God won't answer but the top bit if any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given him I just want to stop on wisdom what is wisdom a good definition that I heard I think it's from Jim Packer in one of his books that I read something like this the ability to discern a good goal and plan steps by God's grace so that it will happen wisdom to see a good end result it would be great to see such and such a church with such and such elders such and such deacons such and such plans being put into effect wisdom to see a good goal and then steps to make it happen well that's not going to happen without that person is going to need a contract so let's think about a contract and those people are going to need voting for so who's going to do the voting those people are going to need financial support so where did that financial support come from etc like that in wise faith praying is not the opposite of planning praying goes hand in hand with planning praying is not the opposite of action praying goes hand in hand with action to plan in wise faith it seems to me that a truly praying church will be a church that forms wise plans and embarks on paths of wisdom this would be a wonderful goal what can we do to attempt that such and such steps to that so for example we prayed and now we need to put our advertisement for the future ministry we need to act we have prayed we need to act we need to plan in wise faith and to act in faith to act in dependent faith this is just spinning this out a little bit

[45:35] Jesus said I am the vine you are the branches! If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing so it does mention nothing it says apart from me you can do nothing without me you can do nothing but what it does say is with me you can bear fruit depending on him without you we can do nothing Lord but depending on you with you there is fruit to be born acting independent in space dependent space faith acting in dependent faith without Christ we can do nothing I mean to say nothing useful nothing of abiding value nothing eternal but with him he says his purpose is for Christians to produce fruit so depending on him we can endeavour and expend our energies and put ourselves out and do stuff and be fruitful so you could ask how can

I get that opportunity to tell my neighbour about Jesus be a good thing to pray and then act in dependent faith what could I do this week that I can get an opportunity to tell my neighbour about Jesus so that was the first question the first answer was what should we do answer nothing don't think that's a satisfactory answer waiting yeah waiting to see what God will do but thirdly acting depending on the Lord Jesus Christ acting in faith and then there was the fourth answer which I said was just a sentence what should we do after we've had a week of prayer keep praying so just a footnote here so ladies and gentlemen I don't know you all some of you perhaps have come along and you're a bit surprised what they're on about this is a week of prayer that we've Christians our conviction is that prayer is being involved in the purposes of the God who made everything and that is the most important thing any human being can ever be can do the plan of this God is the big thing that is happening in the world it is the reason the world still exists if God's plan had come to its fulfillment God to say that's it finished the reason the world still exists because there are more people to be saved and more work to be done and if you are sort of thinking about this from the outside I would like to encourage you don't stay on the outside of this this is the plan to be on the inside of part of it not spectator or worse still sort of going in the opposite direction don't let yourself stay on the to the heart of the plans of God he's the one who can do that you need to have a good chat with him you need to have a real good talk with the Lord Jesus

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