

# When Defeat Seems Sure

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning our attention will be directed to verses 1 through 24.! Put your name, and if you want to just ask it verbally at the end, you're free to do that as well.

Last week I mentioned that the motivation behind this three-part series on prayer is that we want to grow as people of prayer.

And so my prayer is that the Lord will use these three sermons, make them useful for us as we seek to do that.

Acts chapter 12, beginning in verse 1. 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.

[ 1 : 29 ] This was during the days of unleavened bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Now when Herod was about to bring him out on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains and sentries before the door were guarding the prison.

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and the light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, Gallop quickly.

And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, Dress yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And he said to him, Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.

And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

[ 2 : 58 ] When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord. And they went out and went along one street.

And immediately the angel left him. 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.

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.

And when he knocked at the door of the gate where a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer, 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.

And 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.

[ 4 : 15 ] But Peter continued knocking. And when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

And he said, Tell these things to James and to the brothers. Then he departed and went to another place. And when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of him.

Sorry, over what had become of Peter. And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death.

Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. And they came to him with one accord.

And having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace because their country depended on the king's country for food. On the appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them.

[ 5 : 44 ] And the people were shouting, the voice of a God and not of a man. Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory.

And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. For the word of God increased and multiplied. Let's pray.

Father, we're grateful this morning for the privilege, the indescribable privilege of being able to be addressed by you from your word.

Lord, we have heard in our hearing the very words of God. Father, I do pray now that in the preaching, likewise, your voice will be heard.

Father, may your voice be above my voice and may it lodge in every heart. I pray for the convicting power of the Spirit to convince us of the truth of your word and to convince us of the claim of your word on our lives.

[ 7 : 08 ] Father, we pray and ask that you would grant us illumination and lead us into truth. And Lord, we pray that the end result will be that we would grow in prayer and your name will be glorified.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the most glorious passages of Scripture for believers in Christ is Romans chapter 8.

In particular, verses 31 through 39. It's glorious because as believers in Christ, we are assured, we are assured in this passage that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

But Romans 8, 31 through 39 is also a very sobering passage. It's sobering because the Apostle Paul lists the kinds of difficulties that we can face as we live life in this fallen world. even though we are Christians. The Apostle Paul enumerates a list of difficult situations that we as Christians may face.

[ 8 : 33 ] He talks about tribulation and distress and persecution and nakedness and famine and danger and even death.

Now, Paul was not seeking to be exhaustive. He wasn't seeking to list every single threat and danger and difficulty that we may actually face. For example, he doesn't mention difficulties like sickness or divorce or unemployment and other adversities that are regular and that we as Christians face.

And the truth is, with the exception of persecution, unbelievers face these same things as well. But unlike unbelievers, we who have trusted in Christ have the assurance that none of these things, indeed nothing at all, will ever separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Now, although we know that our salvation in Christ is eternally secure, we know that. What do we do when difficulties come our way?

We know it doesn't affect our security in Christ. We know that if death comes to us, we will be absent from the body and present with the Lord. But what do we do when difficulties come our way?

[ 10 : 08 ] Or to put it another way, what do we do when the odds are stacked against us and defeat seems sure? Well, I want to offer a one-word answer as the first and foremost thing we should all do.

it is the only, it is not the only thing that we should do, sorry, it's not the only thing that we should do, but it is the one thing, the first and foremost thing that we should all do.

And that is pray. When defeat seems sure, pray. And that's exactly what we observe in this account in Acts chapter 12 that we are considering this morning.

Two simple points and the first one is this. In the midst of a serious adversity, when defeat seemed sure, what we see in chapter 12 of the book of Acts is the church prayed.

The church prayed. That's what Luke tells us in verse five. And Luke is the author of the book of Acts as he is the author of the book of Luke.

[ 11 : 36 ] We see in verse five, So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

At the very outside of this passage, we are told that Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. And then in verses two and three, we are told that he killed James, the brother of John.

And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. He arrested him during the days of unleavened bread. And Herod had four squads of four soldiers each to guard Peter to ensure that he could not escape.

And that would have been typical in that day in terms of how they would guard a very highly prized prisoner who they did not want to escape.

So a total of sixteen soldiers were guarding Peter. And the way it would have worked is four of them would be on a shift for three hours at a time so that they didn't get tired and so that Peter had no real possibility of escaping.

[12:52] And when we consider all of that, it means one thing. Peter was as good as dead. When you consider those facts that Luke lays out for us in the first five verses of chapter 12 of the book of Acts, Peter was as good as dead.

Herod was determined to kill him after Passover. Just as he had killed the brother of John James, he was determined that he would kill Peter, but the church still prayed.

Actually, we're told that they didn't just pray out of some kind of duty. They didn't just pray some perfunctory prayer. What Luke tells us is that they prayed earnestly.

When the church looked the feet square in the face, they didn't give up. They prayed. When you think about that, that's quite remarkable.

It's quite remarkable that although Peter was as good as dead, the church prayed. Now, we don't have the time frames exact in Luke's account, but this would have been a pretty compressed period of time, perhaps no more than about six or seven days.

[14:22] Because first in verse three, we're told that he was arrested during the days of unleavened bread. Now, the days of unleavened bread would have been seven days. Seven days leading up to the Passover.

And his intent was to bring him out after Passover, let him have a kangaroo court, judge him, and then execute him.

But he couldn't do it during the feast of unleavened bread because had he done so, it would have been upsetting to the Jews. They would have seen it as desecrating the Passover.

So, he decided that he would wait. Then Luke tells us this in verse six. He tells us that when Herod was about to bring him out on the very night, so this would be shortly after Passover, on the very night, that was the night that Peter was released out of prison.

And when he was released that same night, there were people gathered in Mary's house and they were praying. Now, they could have been praying for many reasons. But the context that Luke seems to present to us is that they were praying, if not exclusively for Peter, primarily for Peter.

[15:48] And Luke is giving us an insight into the life of the early church. And he helps us to see that even when defeat seems certain, when defeat was looking them square in the face, they prayed.

And again, not only prayed, they prayed earnestly. When defeat seems sure, I think you would agree with me that for many of us, we don't pray.

When all seems lost, we sometimes tend not to pray. We accept it and we resign to it being as it is. And we don't pray to the God for whom nothing is too hard. And maybe this morning that may be your situation. Maybe this morning you may be looking at some circumstance that seems pretty set, that doesn't seem like it will change.

A door that may be closed that doesn't seem like it will open. What is your response to that?

[17:03] How are you responding to that? Are you just running to plan B without even having prayed? Are you resigning yourself to the reality in your mind that it cannot change and it will not change and therefore you will not pray?

I encourage you this morning to be strengthened in your faith in God by this account that we have in Acts chapter 12 and look to God in spite of the way things seem and pray.

So when defeat seemed sure the church prayed. And when the church prayed God answered.

And that's my second point. When the church prayed God answered. Now it may seem in this passage that God only answered in one way.

But actually God answered in three ways. The first and obvious way that he answered is he delivered Peter.

[18:25] He delivered Peter from prison and from death. I notice Luke is very careful to show us the miraculous nature of Peter's deliverance.

We've already seen that there were four squads of four soldiers assigned to guard him. In verse six we're told that Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains.

And the picture of that is that he would have been chained to each one of them. And that's a small miracle right there in itself that Peter was able to sleep. Knowing what had happened to James and knowing what Herod intended to do to him.

And Peter was under no illusion. Notice what it says. Luke tells us in verse 11 it says when Peter came to himself he said now I am sure that the Lord had sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.

Peter was under no illusion that he was going to have a different experience from James. He fully expected that James' lot was going to be his lot.

[ 19 : 46 ] That was what Herod planned to do. But in addition to these four squads of soldiers and the two that he was chained to there were two more soldiers who were guarding the gate of the prison.

And Luke tells us that a light shone into the cell which is indicating something supernatural something extraordinary. They wouldn't have had a light to turn on like that.

And he tells us that when that happened Peter's chains fell off of his hands. And Peter and the angel passed by the guards and they came to the iron gate and the gate opened.

It was the first automatic gate that existed. So when you go in Solomon's and those other places the door opens, remember that's old technology. So Luke is careful to give us these details to help us to see this was a divine intervention.

this was a supernatural event that took place. Now Peter went to Mary's house no doubt because that was probably the primary place or one of the primary places where the church met.

[ 21 : 01 ] And although they were praying for Peter, it was hard for them to believe that he had come to the door. It was hard for them to believe that he was no longer in prison.

They didn't believe Rhoda. Even she said to them, Peter is there. And they said, no, you're out of your mind. And you can tell how they'd want to believe it. And they're saying, you know, the reason they told her she was out of her mind, but she was really insisting that this is so.

And they're really saying this can't be so. There's no way you can get out of that prison. But yet they were earnestly praying to God. You know the reason that they really, when you think about it, the reason they really didn't believe that Rhoda could have been telling them the truth, is their prayer request was no small request.

Peter was as good as dead. They did not really expect Peter to come out alive. We don't know the specifics of their prayer.

We don't know exactly what they prayed. But their prayer request, if it was concerning Peter in that way, it was no small request.

[ 22 : 15 ] He was as good as dead. But then there's a second reason that they didn't really believe her. And it is because they could not have been confident.

They could not have been absolutely certain that God would have released Peter. Even if they were specifically praying, Lord, intervene, save his life, deliver him, even if they prayed that prayer.

They could not have been entirely certain that God was going to answer that prayer. And the reason is that God is sovereign.

And when you read the prayers, in particular, in Acts chapter 4, they prayed another prayer. And the way they opened that prayer was they began, sovereign Lord. They recognized that God is absolutely sovereign.

sovereign. And because God is sovereign, he does not always answer our prayers the way we ask him to. He doesn't always do that. And that's why we find in verse 2 that Herod killed the brother of John, James.

[ 23 : 31 ] Herod would have arrested James. And no doubt, the same way the church prayed for Peter, they prayed for James. And I doubt that they prayed less earnestly for James than they did for Peter.

But the sovereign Lord allowed James to be killed by Herod. He did not answer them any prayers that were prayed, no doubt, on James' behalf.

And so the church could not be absolutely sure that because they were praying for Peter, Peter was going to be released from prison. James wasn't. And yet they prayed.

And I think this really is the tension that we must have as we approach prayer. When we've had the experience of God saying no in prayer, as he did with James, that we will still press in and pray. Again, here's the exact same circumstance. Same wicked ruler has arrested one of the leaders of the church and the feet are sure, the feet seem sure, but yet they prayed, even though in a very similar circumstance, God did not answer that prayer in accordance with what they no doubt would have been praying.

[ 25 : 09 ] But delivering Peter from prison and from death was not the only way that God answered. God also answered the prayers of the church by killing Herod.

We find the account in verses 20 through 23 and here again, Luke goes to great lengths to help us to see this was no ordinary death. He didn't just get sick one day and just die the way we normally at some point expect to die.

No, his death was an extraordinary death. It's the most remarkable account. Herod thought he was large and in charge. He thought that everything started and ended with himself.

Luke tells us that he gives this impressive speech to the people of Tyre and Sidon because they were dependent upon him for food.

They were dependent upon his country for food. They heard him speak and they said, Oh, a God, this is not a man. That's the voice of a God. And Herod did not humble himself.

[ 26 : 24 ] He didn't say to them, I'm a mere man just like you. Don't call me a God. No, he drank it all in. He took it all in. He took what belongs to God alone.

God and the way Luke describes it. Luke says, Herod was eaten by worms when he was alive and then he died.

Notice the sequence in verse 23. Struck down, eaten by worms, breathed his last. It isn't struck down, breathed his last and then some worms ate him.

No, it struck down, eaten by worms, breathed his last. God answered the prayers of the church. Turn with me over to Acts chapter 4. And this is a very similar account where Peter and John had been arrested and they were beaten and when they were released they sought out their brothers and I want to pick the story up in verse 23.

[ 27 : 53 ] It says when they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them. And when they heard it they lifted up their voices together to God and said sovereign Lord who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them who through the mouth of our father David your servant said by the Holy Spirit why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed for truly in this city they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

It wasn't lost on them that these were just arbitrary events happening because they weren't. They recognized there was a sovereign God over it all and they recognized that in the grand scheme of things although these individuals did evil and are going to be held accountable for their evil they did what your hand and your plan had predestined to take place and now Lord look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus and when they had prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness no record of them praying for protection no indication at all that they were fearful by all that had transpired but they prayed and they asked that

God would give them boldness that they would continue to proclaim the truth and they mentioned they called by name Herod and Pontius Pilate and said Lord look upon them look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak in this way you know sometimes when God answers in a moment he's not just answering that prayer but he's answering other prayers that have been prayed and what is clear is that Herod came to judgment Herod's fruit as it were of sin became ripe and he was judged God heard not only the prayers that they were praying concerning Peter's deliverance but also all the other atrocities that Herod had done and Herod what we see is the hardness of the human heart when you think about this

Herod would have known about the resurrection Herod would have known about that great resurrection of Jesus where they had the lies going on or his disciples stole his body and all the

other things and now you have something very similar happening right under your own watch and he didn't humble himself he should have known that there's no way that Peter could have naturally escaped 16 soldiers watching him chained to two of them you're in this dungeon guards at the gate and these soldiers would have known that their very lives would stick because the law of the Roman military was if you lose a soldier whatever that sorry if you lose a criminal or someone who's arrested whatever's supposed to happen to that person is going to happen to you these men knew that their lives were on the line and yet in the hardness of his heart

Herod refused to humble himself and to believe on Jesus Christ with whom he would have been acquainted and instead he had the soldiers executed and then the third way that the Lord answered is in verse 24 in verse 24 we are told the word of God increased and multiplied no doubt the same way these disciples would have prayed in chapter 4 after Peter and John were released from prison they would have prayed in a very similar way praying for the spread of the gospel praying for the advance of the gospel because that was the issue that was why Herod arrested James in the first place that was why he arrested Peter because he was breaking the church down he was trying to do what scripture says you smite the shepherd and the sheep are scattered he was dealing with the pillars of the church to destroy the church but

[ 33 : 22 ] Herod forgot that God was God and not him and God unquestionably judged and killed him no doubt and answers to the prayers of his people when we read this statement but the word of God increased and multiplied you must understand that that is a reference for the gospel that is a reference for the gospel going forth it's not just random bible studies or something like that that is that is the gospel that saves sinners that is the word of truth that sinners can be reconciled to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that is the word that was growing and multiplying and that is the word that these disciples these believers they understood they were willing to give their lives in the process of publishing this gospel they were quite aware of the very real possibility that they could die doing this but they wanted to see the gospel spread so when defeat seemed sure the church prayed and God answered there's a whole lot that we can apply and learn from this account in

Acts chapter 12 but let me close by offering three summary thoughts for us because as long as we are on this earth we will experience situations where defeat seems sure first when defeat seems sure we should pray and remember God's power when defeat seems sure we should pray and remember God's power there is no situation no circumstance that we will ever face that is an impossibility for God none zero God is all powerful and this account that we have here in Acts chapter 12 is a reminder of his great power that he has often displayed in history whatever we face however large it might be however difficult it may seem however entrenched it may seem we can pray and remember

God's power and then second when defeat seems sure we should pray and remember God's sovereignty although God is all powerful and he can grant our hardest requests he doesn't always grant them and we should remember that for reasons we don't know God sometimes answers yes and he sometimes answers no and again we're reminded of this truth in this account in Acts chapter 12 the church would have prayed in the same way for James as they prayed for Peter the Lord allowed Herod to kill James but he delivered Peter when the church prayed and so we must pray mindful of God's power but also mindful of his sovereignty so we share our hearts we make our specific petitions and requests made known to God remembering that he's all powerful but remembering as well that he is all sovereign and then third when defeat seems sure we should pray and remember

God's glory and this is a point that brother Sean B made last week during the question and answer time our ultimate desire in prayer should be to see God's glory glory and the reason is that God's glory is what he ultimately seeks God himself seeks his own glory and whatever he does ultimately that is what he seeks and because God is God and he is deserving of all glory it would be wrong for God not to seek his own glory and so God glorifies himself in all things even when we don't understand what's going on we don't understand why the Lord would let Herod kill James but not Peter but we can know this with full assurance based on the witness of God's word that all that God does is ultimately for his own glory now see we have two options when we think of a thought like that we can think and say

I can't see how God could be glorified in that situation or we can take God at his word that he seeks his own glory ultimately in all things and many times I think what happens for us is that the reason

we aren't able to accept that God could be glorified in something that we could be aghast about is that that's all we see we don't see anything beyond that and that's not all that there is God's purposes God's plans are oftentimes not open to our naked eye we're not able to see them but ultimately all that God does is for his glory so while it is legitimate for us to pray very specific prayers with our hearts oh Lord deliver James oh Lord deliver Peter the most important prayer that we must pray after praying those specific prayers is oh Lord glorify your name

[ 40 : 16 ] Lord glorify your name not in ways that I may necessarily understand but nonetheless you glorify your name and help me to trust that whatever you do is for your greater glory the key there is not to understand but to trust that God in all things will seek his greater glory so brothers and sisters when defeat seems sure let us pray let's pray father we are grateful that you are all powerful you are all together sovereign and you seek ultimately your own glory

God would you grant us the grace that even in the face of what seems to be sure defeat when all seems to be lost help us to remember that throughout history you've shown yourself as a God who is all powerful and all sovereign and who seeks his glory and Lord help us in the face of those odds to still look to you and pray to you trusting that whatever you do will ultimately be for your greater glory I pray this Lord in particular for those of us who walk through extended trials prayers those of us who have prayed prayers again and again and again

Lord help us to remember that ultimately all that you do is for your greater glory we pray in Jesus name amen are there any questions any questions brother could we have someone to just take the mic so we can get the question as well good morning good morning just want to remember the time period between acts 4 acts 4 when the prayer that prayer was made and acts 12 when another prayer was made by disciples of Jesus what was the time frame

I don't know you may ask that when you made the comment in your preaching about why they were praying in Acts chapter 12 for Peter's deliverance before they prayed for Herod they were concerned about the threat threatening and sometimes there is a to us seemingly a delay in our prayers God answering our prayers so that's why I asked what was the time period between the two chapters yeah there is often that delay and even there we have to trust I mean could you imagine a person you ask them for something they can give it to you right now and they just withhold it because they want to withhold it God is not that way we can trust that there is divine reason there is divine purpose between when we would pray and when we would get some definitive answer to that prayer and yeah it's a good question

I don't know it right off I don't know if it's I imagine that there may be some internal evidence in the book of Acts where you can probably get some ranges in time but I don't know right off how long that would have been but it's a good point to remember that there's often times a lapse between when we pray and when we receive some definitive answer from God and the truth about that as well is that sometimes we aren't even sure that God has certainly answered in our situation even though it's been a long time so you think for example a person has been praying for healing for quite some time at what point do you determine that God is not going to heal after two months two years ten years we don't know and that's why we continue to pray and I think truth be told with illness

[ 45 : 54 ] I mean barring some divine revelation from God I will not heal you we really don't know that until that person breathes his or her last breath any other questions Jen not necessarily a question but an experience I've always often looked at people's situations and struggles that they've had and seen how God delivered them and that was a very answer to prayer I guess you would call it and then you know many of you a year ago you know that I was back home and taking a sabbatical but also walking through a hard thing with my sister with her husband and that's one of those situations like you spoke of today like with the difference between Peter and James of God answering the prayer for someone but seemingly not answering the prayer for my sister's situation

Tony just to give you all an update Tony is clean today he's walking through a lot of accountability and all these different things and so that's an answer to prayer why it didn't happen in the context of their marriage and a divorce had to happen as a result I don't know I still so I guess my question for that how do you pray beyond that like okay God thank you for the answer to that prayer of maybe delivering him from this but it didn't happen within the context that you designed of their marriage so I guess I still struggle of working through that you're asking how do you pray specifically for him and your sister yeah I would say pray specifically for them and for God's will to be done in their lives and see even there even there Jen is the door absolutely closed the answer is no the answer is no

I'm not in any way trying to hold out hope that they will be reconciled but some have been reconciled after divorce so there is that real possibility I don't recommend praying for that I don't recommend praying that God would bring them together because sometimes when we pray those kinds of prayers we try to play God ourselves and bring people together and that's never a good idea but pray for them specifically pray that God's will be done in their lives and that is something God certainly has done in terms of bringing divorced people back together but we don't know what his will is really for them and remember we live in a fallen world and many times we experience things that we rather not experience like divorce but it's a reality of a fallen broken world other questions alright

I guess I have two thoughts actually the first one if I may I'd like to give them separately so I can hear your response the first is no doubt a lot of people think about prayer and faith together and you know we've many of us have been taught that you know you will not get anything from God if you don't have faith kind of thing so when we pray for something we many persons psych themselves out essentially and they hold on to the notion that I must believe because if

I fail to believe then I will not receive what I prayed for and when the thing that they've prayed for doesn't happen then they say that something was wrong with my belief or even with my prayer you respond to that it's a very good question Lyndon and it's a question that I as a pastor have dealt with over many many years and it breaks my heart when I see a person going before the God of the universe their heavenly father and they are going to put on a performance and believing that they have to as Lyndon said cite themselves out to petition God one of the pictures we have in scripture is God as a father to us and Jesus says this Jesus says if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your heavenly father not give good the holy spirit to those who ask him and prior to that he was talking about if a son asks a father to give him a piece of bread he says will he turn around and give him a stone if he asks for a fish will he give him a serpent so let's think about that first on a natural plane how have we approached our fathers for things do we psych ourselves out and try to you know get an angle and try to be on a performance we just we ask we ask and even sometimes when we doubt that we may get it we still ask and the truth is that if it required perfect faith to get something from God none of us would get anything from God there's a story about a man whose son had epilepsy this is right around any that comes with the transfiguration when he brought his son to the other disciples who were not up on the mount with

[ 52 : 32 ] Jesus and asked them to heal him and they couldn't so when Jesus came down he brought his son to Jesus and he said Lord you know my son is thrown in the fire and the spirit tries to kill him would you heal my son and Jesus asked!

him this question Jesus said do you believe I can heal your son and the man said yes Lord I believe but I struggle with unbelief help my unbelief Jesus healed his son Jesus didn't say go away come back when you have faith he healed his son and so I believe what the scripture the linden referred to isn't so much that unless we have no doubt I think what that scripture is referring to is just active unbelief in our hearts and unbelief is different from doubt we can believe just like man but we wrestle with unbelief we are flesh we are dust and God knows that he is tender towards his children this is what it says in Psalm 23 as a father pities his children so the

Lord pities us he knows our frame he knows that we are dust so I believe what that scripture is speaking about is active unbelief in the heart as opposed to us as flesh believing but wrestling with unbelief think about it you have the situation of James we prayed for James James was beheaded that's what remains by the sword his head was taken off and now we're going to pray for Peter do you think humanly speaking that we could pray with absolute assurance praying for Peter's deliverance and not even have a hint that maybe Peter may not be delivered I don't think!

And it's fine for us to lay our doubts before the Lord and to pour out he knows them anyway whether we pretend like we have all faith and all the other things but sadly what Lyndon referred to is what I would call a virus that has gone into the church and infected many people that we go before the Lord treating him as some tyrant treating him as some arbitrary capricious person who wakes up on a bad day and just says no prayers answered today I'm just in a bad mood he's not the kind of God he's a loving heavenly father he knows our frame and he even knows our requests before we pray and he's kind to us and good to us so I think Lyndon that addresses active unbelief as opposed to the normal realities of doubts flesh frame people like us I hope that's helpful the second question has to do with our attitude during times of difficulty right when as you said initially we all go through

periods of difficulty right and we pray about those we ask the Lord for deliverance etc but as you said we don't know exactly what he is going to do how do we posture our hearts though during those periods to rest in

God's sovereignty and in the fact that he hears us how does that how might that reality become a comfort to our hearts in and of itself because I think that the Lord desires that we are in a place of comfort I don't think he wants us to be in a place of distress can you speak to that yeah I think that if we bear in mind the attributes of God and who he is he's our heavenly father he withholds no good gift from those who walk uprightly before him he's not only sovereign but he's also good perfectly sovereign perfectly good but I think we should also keep in mind again that that point about the glory of God that ultimately what we desire more than anything else is God's glory and I think we really do need to get to the place and think about it this way we are in a scary place if we are actually desiring what we pray more than

[ 57 : 31 ] God's glory and so we want to be praying even if we are resting the thing is so big that we just can't imagine it not going the way we're praying we just need to be praying God give me grace to desire your glory more than I desire this prayer request and I think Lyndon one of the things that we should do when we find ourselves weak and weary as we wait for the Lord and maybe the situation is so big I believe that's where community comes in and I think that's one of the beautiful things we see with the church in the book of Acts is that here they are facing great adversity and they weren't thinking for one moment it's just Peter and James the Bible says that!

laid bad hands on not just James but on others in the church as well so none of them really was exempt so I think they were able to pull together and to be able to pray together and to draw strength from one another so I would say community is also an aspect of that we ought not to be walking through anything that we walk through that's difficult alone because God has put us in community but I would encourage us because I think this is an area we can all grow in to desire God's greater glory more than anything else and let's think for example about Joseph what Joseph went to was hard blood brothers betraying you people falsely accusing you two men you helped out in distress the one who had his dream interpreted who said he was going to remember Joseph never remembered him Joseph went through a lot of bitterness a lot of hardship but it was all for the greater glory of God and so remembering that God does all things ultimately for his greater glory I think that is a comfort to us as well you know what when this life is over this will be over this will be like a dream and then eternity would be all that we know all right we have time for one more and then I'm going to invite the team to come is there another question if there are no others then the team can make your way up