

# Peter, Prison and Prayer

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Date: 13 November 2022

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] A couple of intimations first before we begin. The vacancy committee will meet in the church hall tomorrow night and that's at 7pm. Tomorrow evening 7pm the vacancy committee meets. And then a week Tuesday there will be a meeting of the WFM on Tuesday 22nd November at half past 7 in the church hall. And Muriel McLeod from Stornoway will speak about her work in Cambodia.

And all ladies in the congregation are welcome and please bring along a friend to encourage Muriel in her work. We're now going to worship God singing to his praise from the 34th Psalm.

Psalm 34 we're going to sing verses 1 to 10. Psalm 34 verses 1 to 10. God will I bless all times. His praise my mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. The meek shall hear with joyfulness. Extol the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord. He heard and did me from all fears deliver. They looked to him enlightened were. Not shamed were their faces. This poor man cried. God heard and saved him from all his distresses. The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth. O taste and see that God is good. Who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints. None that in fear shall be with want oppressed. The lion's young may hungry be and they may lack their food. But they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good. Psalm 34 1 to 10. God will I bless all times.

God will I bless all times. His way. My heart shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. God will I bless all times. His way. My heart shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. The Lord shall God will I bless all times. My soul shall boast in God. The Lord shall hear with joyfulness.

God will I bless all times. My soul shall boast in God. The Lord shall God forgive my strength and be your God. ■■■ firm and ■ Tro■■■ICs. He brought his way to surrender.

[ 3 : 2 2 ] God bless him entirely. I bless him today. Our soul shall not ■ of whereof God huff earnings. There fitted his poor.

Among thy God, Ere and save him, From all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord And comes, Unrond and complicit.

All those of the Lord And will we yield Amen.

Amen. O taste and see O God, O world who drows in the You trust Him, this friend, Fear God is safe, And I'll let Him hear Shall be with one, O end.

[ 5 : 1 1 ] The lion's young may hungry be, Alleluia, carefully, But they, O truly, seek the Lord, Shall all again be good.

Let us bow in prayer. O Lord, we pray that we might praise You, And that it might be natural to our hearts, Because our hearts have been changed.

We pray, Lord, for that spiritual vibrancy, So that we will have this desire within our own heart, To worship and to extol the Lord at all times.

We give thanks, Lord, for what Your Word tells us, That although the lions may hunger,  
And that they may lack their food, That those who truly seek the Lord Shall not lack any  
good.

Help us to have that faith and that trust, Even just a simple faith, a simple trust, And to see  
that, and to come to grasp And to lay hold upon the truth of what You say.

[ 6 : 42 ] Sometimes, Lord, we doubt You, And we fear that it won't be as Your Word says, But  
Your Word is always through, Because You're through. And we pray, O Lord, That we  
may trust You with all our heart.

Help us, Lord, not to be leaning to our own understanding, But in all our ways to  
acknowledge You. And we pray for the grace so to do, Because it's not something that we  
can do easily.

We do not want to hand over our ways to You. We want to play our own part and do our  
own thing. But You are showing us that the right way, The correct way, Is to follow You  
completely, And to follow You closely.

Even Peter was following at one time, But he was following afar off. And we know what  
happened. And Lord, we pray that we will follow You closely, In case we too will come to  
deny You like Peter did.

And we pray that You will help us every single day, In our walk with You. Forgive us, Lord,  
for how often we let You down. By what we say, by what we do, And as for what we think,  
Well, it's beyond understanding.

[ 7 : 57 ] We would be utterly ashamed, If others could see the way we think. But we know that You  
see. And there's not one thought, There's not one action, There's not one word ever,  
Thought or spoken or done by us, But is known by You.

And we pray, Lord, That You will forgive us all our sin. And while that can be something  
that Will in many ways cast us down, Your incredible knowledge of us, It is also something  
that lifts us up, Because we know there will be no hidden sin.

There will be no sin anywhere that was missed, That would bring us into condemnation at  
the end of the day, If we are in Christ Jesus. And so we pray that we might indeed have  
that confidence before You, And that we might believe in You.

Help us, Lord, to be people of prayer. We give thanks for the great privilege of prayer, Of  
being able to bring anything and everything to You. We give thanks that Your Word  
doesn't say to us, That if we have big things, That we are to bring them to the Lord in  
prayer.

But it tells us to bring everything in prayer. And so we pray that we might be in the way of  
doing that. Even in the little things, Even in the things that we say, Well, it's not worth  
bothering the Lord with this.

[ 9 : 17 ] But we know, as we look back on life, That it's often big things start with little things. So we  
pray that we might take everything to the Lord in prayer.

Grant us the faith to know that You will answer in the right way. Sometimes You will not  
give us as we require or wish. Sometimes You will answer in a different way.

Sometimes You will answer exactly the way we expect. And so we pray not only that we  
might be bringing everything before You, But that we might be watching as well.

And waiting. And watching and waiting for the answer. And grant us the faith. And the  
understanding to see when You answer. Because sometimes we don't recognize Your  
answers to our prayers.

And so we pray, Lord, for that spiritual vitality. And spiritual understanding. That's what the  
Apostle prayed. That the Church would grow with a knowledge of God's will.

[ 10 : 22 ] And with spiritual understanding. And that's what we pray for ourselves. That we might be filled with the knowledge of Your will. And spiritual understanding. Grant us Your grace then in all that we're about.

Every day and every night. Help us, Lord, in all our different relationships. Wherever we're at. And we give thanks for friendships. We give thanks for family. We give thanks for all the many practical blessings that we have in life.

And although sometimes these blessings can bring their own share of trials and sorrows. We still give thanks for all that You've given to us. And we pray that You'll be with us all.

And with those who are in various states of need. Lord, You know how we are. Maybe there are some here tonight who are really in real need of You. We pray that You will help them.

That You will enable them to see that You're there. That they will know that Your presence is there. And that they can depend upon You. Lord, we pray that You will help us as we face difficulties and challenges.

[ 11 : 27 ] Particularly in the whole financial climate that's out there just now. We know that the pockets are being tightened. And we know that we're being stretched.

And we pray, Lord, that You will help us and deliver us. We give thanks, Lord, for all that we do receive from You and from Your hand. We pray then to bless us here tonight.

Bless this congregation. We pray to bless the vacancy committee tomorrow evening. And we pray that You will guide the congregation forward in the right way to go. We give thanks, O Lord, that You are the great shepherd above all.

You were Israel's shepherd in the past. And You're your people's shepherd today. And we pray, Lord, that You will provide for this congregation. That You will encourage them and do them good.

And that You will bless all the different age groups. And we pray that You will add to their number such as would be saved. Lord, we pray that more and more will come to Your house.

[ 12 : 26 ] And that the congregation will not only grow numerically, but will also grow spiritually as well. Pray for those who aren't able to come out anymore.

Those hearts are here with us. Their prayers are here with us. But we ask, O Lord, that You will be with them in their own place, in their own homes, or wherever they are. Lord, watch over them.

Be with those who are sick and laid aside. Those who are struggling with the difficulties of life. Pray for those who face bereavement and have gone through bereavement.

And ask, Lord, that You will bless them and encourage them and draw near to them in their sorrow and sadness. Lord, we pray to bless us. We had our remembrance Sunday this morning.

Help us, Lord, always to remember the price that was paid for the freedom and liberty that we enjoy. We must never forget those who give the ultimate sacrifice.

[ 13 : 25 ] Help us, Lord, always to remember the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, where He gave His life in order to save those who are lost.

And we pray tonight that if there are any here who so far are still in that condition of lostness, that they might come to know Jesus, who is the only one who is able truly to save.

Bless us then as we wait upon You, Lord. Pray that You will do us good and that You will undertake for us and bless us as a nation. Lord, give wisdom to our rulers, those in authority over us.

Forgive us for how we have turned away from You. We ask, Lord, that You will turn us again more and more to Yourself. Maybe that's what You're doing when we're facing what we seem to be reeling from one difficulty to another.

That, O Lord, our God, we pray that through this, that instead of running further away from You, that we might start running to You. Lord, we pray to bring peace in the world.

[ 14 : 30 ] When we look out, there's so much hatred and violence and bloodshed. O Lord, we long for days of peace. Watch over us then, we pray, and do us good.

Have mercy upon us. Cleanse us, we pray, from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to sing again in Psalm 102 from the second version of this psalm.

Psalm 102. We're going to sing verses 13 to 20. Psalm 102. Second version. Verses 13 to 20.

Amen. Amen. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet thou to Mount Zion shalt extend.

Our time for favour which was set, behold, is now come to an end. Thy saints take pleasure in our stones, her very dust to them is dear.

[ 15 : 31 ] All heathen lands and kingly thrones on earth, thy glorious name shall fear. God in his glory shall appear, when Zion he builds and repairs.

He shall regard and lend his ear unto the needy's humble prayers. The afflicted's prayer he will not scorn. All times this shall be on record.

And generations yet unborn shall praise and magnify the Lord. He from his holy place looked down, the earth he viewed from heaven on high. To hear the prisoners' mourning groan, and free them that are doomed to die.

Verses 13 to 20 of Psalm 102. Second version. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet.

Thou to the Messiah shall extend. Thou to the Messiah shall extend. Thou titha'er time for favour which was set.

[ 16 : 45 ] Behold, is now come to an end. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet.

Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet. Thou shalt arise, and mercy yet.

O he shall appear when Zion evil's own repair.

He shall regard a man this year unto the knees of the air.

The afflicted spirit he will not score. All kinds this shall be our record.

[ 18 : 28 ] And generations yet unborn shall play.

And magnify the Lord. He from this holy place looked at the early youth from end on high.

To hear the blissful morning glow. And free him the hardu to die.

And start to read God's word now. And we read it in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12. Acts chapter 12. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12.

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with a sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

[ 20 : 01 ] Then were the days of unleavened bread. And when he had apprehended him and put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Peter therefore was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains.

And the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison. And he smote to Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly.

And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And he went out and followed him. And it was not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leads unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord.

[ 21 : 21 ] And they went out and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken named Rhoda.

And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad?

But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then they said, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking. And when they had opened the door, And when they had opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, Declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go, show these things unto James and to the brethren.

[ 22 : 47 ] And he departed and went into another place. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, Hottos become of Peter.

And when Herod had sought for him and found him not, He examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and their abode.

And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, And having made Blastus the king's chamberl and their friend, Desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country.

And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, Sat upon his throne and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is a voice of a God and not of a man.

And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, Because he gave not God the glory, And he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied.

[ 23 : 55 ] And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, When they had fulfilled their ministry, And took with them John, whose surname was Mark. Amen.

And may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. We'll sing again Psalm 118, Psalm 118, Verses 17 to 25. Psalm 118, And at verse 17.

I shall not die, but live, And shall the works of God discover.

The Lord hath me chastised sore, But not to death given over. O said ye, open unto me the gates of righteousness, Then will I enter into them, And I, the Lord, will bless.

This is the gate of God, By it the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, For thou me heardst, And hast my safety been. That stone is made head cornerstone, Which builders did despise.

[ 24 : 57 ] This is the doing of the Lord, And wondrous in our eyes. This is the day God made, And it will joy triumphantly. Save now, I pray thee, Lord, I pray, Send now prosperity.

Verses 17 to 25, Psalm 118, I shall not die, But live. I shall not die, But live.

Till the world of God is come, Then the Lord of me chastised, sw imitate without God's forgiveness, V/.

■ saas f säga, O 477, O 487, To give face the...? noch■ woods, bah! Ne when they're fire vacant cause, The hallwhat's gehiance on them, And the hallways in the Samuel Plymouth, Then will I enter into Him, and I am more blessed.

The sixth and fifth of God I give, now just now and now, We will find His heart of the earth, and I am not my sin, He is.

[ 27 : 08 ] But so is faith and art ever so, which will let Him be, and He is.

This is the hearing of the Lord, and now that's in our eyes.

This is the day God made, with joy triumphantly.

Say now I pray Thee, Lord I pray, send now prosperity.

Let's turn again to look at this chapter we read in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12.

[ 28 : 35 ] And really just reflecting over the whole chapter, the wonderful story that's told us there. Maybe if we're to home in on any particular part of it, we can maybe see at verse 5, Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

And as we all know, one of the greatest things that can happen to us in life is that we come to know the Lord Jesus as our own Savior. It changes life.

And it changes life for the better, because we receive, when we receive God's grace in our heart, that is the beginning of glory. That is the start of glory, because grace leads into glory.

And we always think about glory, the glory hereafter, but it begins with grace. It starts within our heart. And when we become Christians, we get what we couldn't get anywhere else.

You can't go to a shop and buy so much a bag of joy or a bag of peace, or you go to the shop and buy a bottle of love or anything like that.

[ 29 : 57 ] You can't buy these things. But when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, this is part of what we receive, because in receiving Jesus, we receive his joy, we receive his love, we receive his peace.

Yes, he says, my peace I give you. Not as the world gives. The world gives a kind of a peace, but the world takes it back again. Whenever anything goes wrong, whenever things change, that peace goes.

The peace Jesus gives is settled. So, being a Christian, of course, is this great blessing. But as we know, it's not always an easy life.

The moment we become Christians, while life changes, in that we see things in a different way, we understand things in a different way, but it also brings opposition.

It brings enemies that we weren't aware of before. Not only enemies from without, and we see that in this chapter, but enemies within.

[ 31 : 02 ] And that's what makes a Christian life so difficult. Because the enemies that we face aren't just outside. The enemies are here within our own heart. Probably the greatest enemies we face are within our own heart.

And that's what makes it so difficult. Because, as the Apostle said, the good that I would do, I don't do. And the evil that I wouldn't do, that's what I end up doing. And I'm sure we can all say, I know exactly what he meant when he said that.

So, we face this constant battle between what we term the flesh and the spirit. But there are also enemies without. We know that Satan is an enemy without, but he works within.

The flesh is already there, but the enemy of our souls, he comes from without, and he attacks us within. But then we have enemies outwith.

We have the world. And that comes in various shapes, and sizes, and forms, and forces. And we know that in this world, as we live today, that there are many people, and it's always been the case, who are so opposed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 32 : 13 ] There are many people today, in our own country, and they would love nothing better than the Bible would be banned. That we would no longer be allowed to have the freedom to worship, as we do.

And they're trying to make out that, they'll say, oh, it's okay, if you have faith, have it to yourself. But you mustn't tell anybody about it. It mustn't come into, creep into society, in any shape or form.

There's such a powerful movement at first today, trying to squash the great privilege of being able to share a person's faith.

And it's, when we look back, in a short period of time, it has become quite extraordinary. I remember when, a good number of years ago, and I used to say, it's amazing, wonderful, the freedom that we have.

We can, people, you can do outdoor preaching, you can preach. It's not the same anymore. You can be dragged away for preaching the word of God now. That's the way it's become in our own land.

[ 33 : 19 ] So, the freedoms that we enjoyed, and maybe we took for granted, have been taken away bit by bit. And there's a very subtle, a very subtle forces at work, which we know, of course, is from evil hearts and from Satan, but they're affecting the whole of society.

But here we have, in this chapter, we have, we find this king, King Herod, who is out to silence the voice of the church.

And we know that this Herod, this king here, he was of a dynasty, they were a very cruel lot. And they had a particular hatred of Christianity.

That is very evident. Because this Herod, this man, Herod Agrippa, who had James beheaded, was a grandson of Herod the Great.

And Herod the Great was the king in Bethlehem at the time when Jesus was born. And we all remember what he did. He commanded that all the infants would be put to death.

[ 34 : 27 ] Remember how they were to be put to death in order that Jesus would be killed right at the very start. He wasn't going to have any rival to the throne or anybody that would usurp his power coming about.

And so he was this fearful butcher, was the grandfather of this man. And this man also, Herod Agrippa, was a nephew of Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist put to death, who had him beheaded.

So you can see that there were an asterisk lot, these Herods, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa. The three of them had blood, real blood in their hands of the church's blood.

And so we see that not only is he himself a bad man, but he comes from a bad dynasty. But you know, you can't get away with it. And you cannot live your life not only in opposition to God, but railing against the cause of Christ.

[ 35 : 37 ] Because it's very clear by the end of the chapter, and we'll see that, how the tide completely turns. And God has this wonderful ability of turning everything on its head.

You see, at the beginning of the chapter, Herod is puffed up with his own power, and he decides to kill one of the leaders of the early church.

And this was a political move. Because you see, the Herods, who were of the Roman lot, they were hated by the Jews because of the way that the Romans were taking over the land and were holding sway within the land, and the Jews hated the Romans.

So there was always a tension between the Jewish leaders and between the Roman authorities. Always a tension. And there was a lot of political maneuvering going on.

And Herod, when he took James and had him executed, and he saw that this actually worked, there was a great move as far as he could see, with the Jewish leaders, the Jewish leaders who were so opposed to Christ.

[ 36 : 56 ] The blinded Jewish leaders, the religious leaders. And so he thought, right, this was a good move. What I'll do next is I'll go for Peter. Peter's the spokesman.

He's the head of the church. And so he arrests Peter and he keeps him in prison to take him out at a certain time for execution. Now, of course, as we say, this must have been an incredible shock to the church.

Because here's the church in its infancy and here's the church and it's beginning to develop and to grow. And Peter had been used by God to bring thousands to faith.

Remember at the Pentecost when he preached thousands and thousands were converted through his preaching. So there must have been shockwaves throughout the church at the imprisonment of Peter in realisation that what happened to James was likely to happen to Peter.

And Peter, remember, had preached that message and his message was a very simple one. It's a message that hasn't changed. It's the same message to today. To repent and to believe. And he told the Jews as he preached there, he said, you put the Son of God to death.

[ 38 : 08 ] And he told them that there were two things that they had to do. They had to repent of their sin and they had to believe in the Jesus that they had put to death. And it was a very brave message but it was a message that God blessed and it's still the only message that we can proclaim.

Jesus Christ and him crucified and Jesus Christ and him raised from the dead. Because there is still no other message but that we repent of our sin and we believe in Jesus.

That's it. At the end, that's it. That we repent of our sin and we believe in the Lord Jesus. And so, as we say, Herod took Peter and you'd think Peter was the most dangerous person on planet earth because you see how Herod deals with him.

He's surrounded by guards. He's probably put into the inner prison. And he's here in a cell. He's chained to two prison guards and there are another two at the door.

Tells us that there's this between four quaternions of soldiers. In other words, there were 16 soldiers involved and they would be on shifts.

[ 39 : 26 ] There were these 16 that were given. There would be two chained to Peter and two at the door. And then maybe every four hours or whatever there would be the changing of the guard. And another two would take the place sitting or chained to Peter and another two at the door and such like.



So you would think that here's, you would say to Yeshua, this must be a terrorist. This must be such a dangerous man. He must be incredibly evil. He's in the inner prison, right in at the very heart of the prison, chained.

And he's got 16 soldiers committed to looking after him. Oh, what a man this must be. Who is he? A follower of Jesus preaching the gospel.

It just shows us just the sheer enmity of those opposed to Christ. So Herod's taking no chances and I believe part of the reason Herod's taking no chances although he had James put to death he'd never forget what happened with Jesus of how there had been guards watching the tomb and the big stone that was guarding the tomb and yet stone was rolled away and Jesus rose from the dead.

So we're told that Peter was kept in prison. But that's the beauty of this verse but prayer was made without ceasing of the church and to God for him.

[ 40 : 49 ] Earnest prayer, strong prayer, incessant prayer, continuous prayer. And you know that's the most wonderful privilege that you and I have is the privilege of prayer.

It's one of the things maybe we take for granted. but you know when we pray it puts us in touch with omnipotence. It puts us in touch with the creative power that brought this very world into being.

You know what it says in the book of Daniel about the Lord that he does according to his will with the inhabitants of the earth with the armies of heaven and with the inhabitants of the earth.

He rules over all. By the word of his power he brought into being. So when we pray it brings us into touch with this God who hasn't changed.

The Bible tells us God can't change. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. And that's one of the most wonderful privileges that you and I have that we can come to God with anything and about anything.

[ 41 : 55 ] It doesn't matter. Sometimes we say oh that's too little to bother God about. No it's not. And we have to bring all the little things the little practical things of life bring everything to him in prayer.

And so the church prayed. That's what they did. It's one of the great but the Bible if you go through the Bible it shows how prayer opened the Red Sea and prayer brought fire from heaven.

Prayer it was that opened that shut the mouths of lions and such like. The church prayed. It was Mary Queen of Scots. She said she prayed she feared the prayers of John Knox more than an army of 10,000 men because she knew the reality of prayer.

So here we are and the church is facing a crisis and the church does what it ought to do it prays. And you know so often in life that's when we really pray is when we face a crisis.

Because far too often in the general run of life our prayer life might be dull it might be we might be just going through the motions.

[ 43 : 14 ] If people say do you pray yes I pray do you pray every day yes I pray every day but you know when something comes into your life that throws your life upside down you really begin to pray.

Prayer takes on an urgency takes on a fervor it's real prayer and you know that's how it should be really it's sad sometimes that it takes a crisis to really drive us to this but you know God wants us God wants us to be people of prayer not simply asking to get things but in order that we will get to know more and more that's how we get to know one another is by spending time with one another by talking to one another that's where our relationship is built up and God wants us to build up a relationship with us and in order to do that we need to spend time we spend time listening to what he has to say to us which is his word and we spend time speaking to him and it is never ever the devil will tell you it's wasted time and particularly in the speed and the hurry of the day we're living and he says oh you haven't time to spend all that time in prayer time spent in prayer is never ever lost time never it is always valuable time it is time that cannot you can't put a price on how wonderful that time is and so it's through the Lord wants us to get to know him more and more and so we rob ourselves of the greatest joy and the greatest delight by not spending time as we should with the

Lord in prayer so here's the church and it's in crisis and the Lord responds to the prayers of the church by sending his angel now when you look at Peter in the prison there's something wonderful here and I'm not saying anything that we don't know already but we're just going over that's what so much of so much of preaching and teaching is refreshing our minds on things we maybe already know and it's good for us to do this we know this story so well but what what's wonderful here is that the night before Peter is going to be taken out to be executed how do we find him well if we were to get cameras that were to look into the prison how do we find Peter here he is the night before Herod verse 6 and Herod would have brought him forth the same night how do we find Peter the night before his execution he's sleeping sound asleep you might say to yourself if I was going to be executed in the morning

I probably wouldn't be sleeping that well I'd be so anxious you see Peter had a lot of anxiety there's a lot of things that Peter should or could have been anxious about we know that Peter was married we're told about that about Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law so Peter was obviously he was married so maybe he had a family probably did have a family and so there would be concerns what's going to happen didn't have pensions in the way that we have insurances in the way that we have today so there was a big worry about that and we know that being separated in that way it was John Bunyan who said that in the time when he was in prison for preaching the gospel he said this parting from my wife and my children has been to me like the pulling of my flesh from my bones there was also the worry about the early church there's thousands and thousands have started following what's going to happen he's a leader but Peter is sound asleep maybe part of what the church is doing there's no doubt they're praying for his deliverance they were probably praying for him to get sleep and to get composure and calmness we're told in the psalm so he gives his beloved sleep but I believe that above all

Peter slept because he was sleeping with his head resting on the promises of Jesus he was resting on Jesus word to him because you remember back not very long before in John chapter 21 when we find Jesus and Peter speaking on the shores of Galilee and Peter is being restored by Jesus and Jesus tells Peter that when he is old he's going to receive the martyr's crown that's what he says verily I say unto thee when you were young you girded yourself and walked where you would but when you shall be old thou shall stretch forth thine hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whether thou wouldest not this speak he signifying by what death he should glorify God so Jesus had said to Peter yes you're going to get the martyr's crown but it says when you're old so there's only a very short period of time has passed from this now there's one thing

[ 48 : 45 ] Peter had learned that the words of Jesus were 100% true and Jesus Peter had come to a knowledge of Jesus that that was rock solid there's no doubt whatever that Peter loved prior to this Peter loved Jesus and he had said and he meant that he was ready to go to prison and die with him but you know when push came to shove he wasn't and we remember of how he ended up denying Jesus but things had changed and there was a new Peter now and this Peter had come to a greater knowledge of Jesus and a greater understanding of Jesus and I believe that Peter was sleeping that night not knowing how it was to happen but convinced that this was not the end that God would still have him delivered in whatever way and so it wasn't his concern and so Peter slept like a baby the night before his impending execution and that that's that's real faith and it's so important that we have that kind of faith to trust the

Lord and maybe tonight for some of you you're clinging on to God's word because everything just like it is for Peter it looks it looks grim as you look out in your life and the situation that you're in and you're saying to yourself I don't know what's happening here but you're clinging to God's word you're clinging to the promise of God well the one thing that cannot change is God's word providence can change God's word won't so cling on keep clinging on and God will come at the perfect time to deliver and that's what the angel does the angel comes and it's very interesting verse 7 behold the angel of the Lord came upon him and a light shined in the prison and he smote Peter on the side he pushed him and he said rise up quickly and his chains fell off now notice the order there's first the command then Peter obeys the command and as he does so it's then the chains fall off that's interesting because you see if Peter was going to apply human logic and the angel dunce him and says rise up quickly

Peter would say I can't look look look look I'm chained I can't rise up I would love to rise up it's what I've been wanting to do but I can't I'm stuck look but that's not what Peter did Peter obeyed the heavenly voice instantly and it's as he obeyed that the chains fell off and that's the order of how it is because the Lord says to us seek and you shall find and you know sometimes people will say you know the Lord's not saving me but the thing is the Lord doesn't say to us just carry on the way you just carry on any old way and I'll save you no he says look unto me and be saved seek and you'll find knock and it'll be opened in other words God's command is this seek our duty is to seek and it's in the seeking that we will find it's in the knocking that the door will be opened that's our part our doing now of course the doing of salvation has been done by

Jesus all that saving but this is what is required of us because sometimes people have said I've heard people say and I was guilty of it myself of saying oh the Lord's not interested in me but I wasn't seeking and I would say I would come to church and I would go through the motions and all the rest and I would say oh Lord's not saving me but I wasn't seeking but when you seek you'll find and so this is the order and it'll never change and so we find that Peter is obedient to the order that the chains fell off and so it's wonderful here's the Lord is responding to his church's prayer and so you've got to remember that when God is on your side there's more on your side than are against you even suppose it would appear that the world is against you if God is on your side then you have more on your side so a classic example of that remember was it in Samaria at the time of the prophet

Elisha and the city was surrounded and the servant of Elisha says oh we're done for look at the army out there they're surrounding the city and Elisha said there's more with us than there are with them and you'd think that the servant of Elisha must have thought Elisha's getting old he's losing it a bit but Elisha said Lord open the young man's eyes and the Lord did and he was able to see spiritually that the whole hillside that Elisha was surrounded by the horses and chariots of fire the young man saw oh there's more with us than there are with them and you know we've got to remember that there are ministering spirits to the Elisha salvation if we could see out tonight if we were able to get a little glimpse if the Lord was to take away the veil that is there so that we had spiritual eyes to discern and to see many a time we are helped and delivered and prevented from things by an angelic presence we don't know it we often say oh the devil maybe do this how often do we say an angel saved me or an angel delivered me well that's that's what is happening here in Fort

[ 55 : 00 ] Peter that the Lord has sent his an angel and of course then Peter follows and everything opens up and out they go eventually out of the prison and it seems to be that all of a sudden Peter verse 11 and when Peter was come to himself now he says I know of assurity that the Lord has sent his angel you see as all this was happening Peter kind of thought he was in a it was like a vision it was a dream then all of a sudden there's this realization hey I'm actually out and you can almost see him feeling the walls yeah this is this is real I am outside this wasn't a dream this wasn't a vision and he knew that the Lord had sent an angel and I love what Peter does he doesn't waste any time it's it's not like he just goes straight away and when he had considered the thing he can just see and think oh this is amazing right let's go and where does he go he goes to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark and of course Mark features a lot we find it at the very end there in verse 25

Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and took with them John whose surname was Mark that's this this young man here who was obviously a very close friend of Peter and we believe that the gospel writer of the gospel the gospel of Mark and that Peter was one who certainly gave so much of the information that's what we're led to believe a Lord spirit breathed and spirit inspired so that they were they were they were friends and when he considered the thing he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark so she must have been a woman of some means it would appear that this was a pretty big house and it was probably the best known place where the church the early church met and so here's this prayer meeting underway a fervent urgent prayer meeting Peter knocks at the door the rat-a-ta-tat and we find that this servant girl and as Peter knocked at the door of the gate a young girl a servant girl came named

Rhoda and when she knew Peter's voice apparently the custom in the day was you knocked on the door and shouted your name and when she recognized this is Peter she ran straight back in and told it's Peter and they said no you've got it wrong whoever it is it can't be Peter and you know there's almost something I'm using in this incident because and it's so like us here's the church praying Lord let Peter out and Peter's knocking at the door can I come in with you and they're saying the girl has gone and she said Peter's at the door and they say no it can't be Peter Peter's in prison Lord let Peter out and you know it shows the unbelief that is attached to the belief of our prayers there was a man who said to Jesus Lord I believe help thou mine unbelief and you know that's riddled in all of us and you know sometimes when we pray we know that God can but so often we're hindered and hampered because of our unbelief and sometimes we don't recognize the answer when it's there for us the church couldn't believe the answer was there and sometimes we're a bit like that as well sometimes a bit slow but anyway this girl says listen it is him and then the church say that so there as he continued knocking the the she said why they said you are mad but she constantly affirmed that it was even so then they said it is his angel some people think that people wonder what does that mean and some people say well maybe it is his guardian angel and people talk of guardian angels but the scripture doesn't give us any warrant for a particular guardian angel as such but what as we mentioned we do know that the angels are ministering spirits but it's also a possibility that what they thought was that it was an angel in the appearance of

Peter that had come but of course it is actually Peter and he beckoning them with his hand to hold their peace declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison but you know the the one thing that I really like about the year about that young girl Rhoda is you know she she had more she had more faith really than any of them and in that meeting there would have been there would have been people of really powerful Christians in there church leaders would have been in there none of them were believing that it was Peter at the door apart from Rhoda and it just shows us that sometimes the person with the greatest faith in a congregation might not be the minister might not even be one of the elders oh it might be but it might not be a person's position in the church doesn't necessarily indicate the level of faith every person has faith every person has different gifts and different abilities and that's the way the church works but I believe that the church is full of people as we say before like Mary of

Bethany who was the most spiritually minded follower probably that Jesus had people who have great people who might not have position but have great faith and we thank the Lord for them well here's this Rhoda who's an example of belief and so there's many other things that we could say but there's one last thing that we have to say from this chapter as we conclude is of how it's a whole sermon in itself of how God turns the whole picture around because at the beginning of the chapter now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church he's going to make he's going to make life difficult for the church we find that after Peter is taken verse 19 and when Herod had sought for him and found him not he examined the keepers remember there's 16 men there and commanded that they should be put to death they're put to death because they lost Peter here's this man and he has the power of life and the power of death in his tongue and he thinks he's it and he goes down and he makes a speech and the people say it's the voice of God and not of a man and oh my word did he live that moment and he didn't give God any of the glory in other words he took all that glory to himself and he he was saying oh

[ 62 : 15 ] I'm the man and what did God do at that moment God struck him and see how he died he was eaten of worms and he gave up the ghost here's the man who has all power at the beginning of the chapter but because he has raised his hand against God God says no Herod I'm going to raise my hand against you it's a fearful thing a solemn thing to raise one's hand against God but it also shows it's a wonderful thing to believe in God and to trust in God because God will liberate and God will free those who truly trust in him let us pray Lord our God we pray to bless us and we give thanks for giving us this wonderful episode in your word where we see your deliverance and where we see your answers to prayer oh

Lord grant us to be men and women of prayer grant us Lord to be young people of prayer grant us Lord to be always looking to you and believing in you and trusting you do us good we pray and take away our sins take us all home safely in Jesus name we ask all Amen we're going to conclude singing in Psalm 138 Psalm 138 and we'll sing from verse 5 to the end Psalm 138 four stanzas yea in the righteous ways of God with gladness they shall sing for grades the glory of the Lord who doth forever reign though God be high yet he respects all those that lowly be whereas the proud and lofty ones afar off knoweth he the last verse surely that which concerneth me the Lord will perfect make Lord still thy mercy lasts do not thine own hands works forsake Psalm 138 from verse 5 to the end yea in the righteous ways of God in the righteous ways of God of God's grace by his lips now sing for grace and glory beyond our new love forever and though God

I can't be revoked on his glory one I can't despair and I can't stay in mourning on the Lord we have found Him in at Thee.

Though I in mist of trouble walk, I from Thee shall come.

In my force round I'll stretch Thine hand Thy right hand shall be safe.

[ 66 : 06 ] Surely the heart which concern me the Lord will defend me.

Lord still I never see but do not lie in all and words foresee.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.