

# God Hears and Answers Prayer

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Acts chapter 12, and we read verses 4 and 5. We're going to look at the whole chapter really, but if we home in.

And when he had seized him, that's Peter, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out of prison, out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. The most wonderful thing that anybody can do in this world is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the most wonderful thing for any passion to have Jesus to come into your life, to be the king, to be the chief in your life.

Because the Lord Jesus gives us many wonderful things, things that you can't buy. There are lots of things, I suppose, that you would like to have, but you don't have.

[ 1 : 13 ] And many of these things you can't have because, for instance, you can't afford them. I would love to have a boat, but I can't get a boat because I can't afford to get a boat.

And I'm sure there are lots of things that you would like to have, but you can't afford them, you can't get them. Maybe when you were wee, you would go through the catalogue.

I remember our children, when they were wee, and one of them in particular, used to go through the catalogue and all the toys and say, I'm going to get that, and I'm going to get that, and I'm going to get that, and I'm going to get that, and I'm going to get that.

And I would be thinking to myself, oh, really, with what? But that's very often when people are wee, that's the way they say, I'm going to have that, I'm going to have that. When you get older, you realize life doesn't work like that.

But this is a wonderful thing about what Jesus gives us, is that we don't need any money. You can't go to a shop and say, could I get ten pounds worth of love?

[ 2 : 13 ] Or could I have a bag of peace? That's not the way it is. You can't buy the things that Jesus gives us. Because when Jesus gives us his love, his joy, his peace, all these things, he does so by coming himself by spirit into our heart.

And when he does that, then we come to know his love, his joy, his peace, all these things. So that's why I'm saying it's the most wonderful thing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

But as we see from this chapter, and as we know in this world, following Jesus isn't always the easiest thing. And one of the things that makes it very difficult for following the Lord Jesus Christ is because many, many, many people in the world hate the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that might sound a very strange thing. Because Jesus was the only person that ever lived his whole life in this world who never said one bad thing, who never did one bad thing.

And yet loads and loads and loads of people hated him. And that's strange. And it's still the same today. There are loads and loads and loads of people who hate the Lord Jesus.

[ 3 : 42 ] And that is the most absurd, it's the most crazy thing in the world. To hate somebody who can only do good. And that shows us that there is something within us.

And that little something is called, it's not a little thing, it's called sin, it's a little word. But sin brings us to love the things that God hates.

And to hate the things that God loves. And that's a big problem. It's there in everybody's heart and everybody's life. And it's only God who can help us with that.

And one of the great things is that when Jesus comes, he helps us more and more. Sadly, it doesn't happen altogether in this world. But he helps us more and more to love the things that God loves.

And to hate the things that God hates. Sadly, because sin is still there, we will always a bit love the things that God hates. But one day, that will stop, which is a wonderful thing.

[ 4 : 49 ] However, it's not only that a lot of people hate Jesus. But there's a lot of people actually hate those who follow Jesus. And that's what we read about here in the Bible.

That after Jesus rose up from the dead, and after he had been killed and had risen from the dead, the disciples who had been following Jesus, they began to preach and to tell people about Jesus. And a lot of the Jews didn't like that. And particularly this king, King Herod, did not like that. So he took one of the leaders, James, put him in prison, and then cut off his head with a sword.

He executed him with a sword. Terrible. And because he saw that a lot of the Jews like that, all right, he says, I'm going to get Peter next.

And Peter, of course, was the leader of the church. Now, you know, we read about that just in the Bible. But, you know, sadly, these sort of things are happening in a lot of places in the world, even today.

[ 5 : 53 ] It's one of the really, really sad things. And that's something we have to pray about, is to pray that God will help those people who love him in countries that aren't free like our country.

And they can't worship like we do. Lots of places in the world, we couldn't do what we're doing today. Because all that James did was what I'm doing today, was preaching.

All that Peter was doing is what I'm doing today, was preaching. And James was killed for that, and Peter was going to be next. So, we find that Peter was put into this, like into this dungeon.

And we find that there were four lots of soldiers. That's what it tells us. He was sleeping. He was, verse 4, he was put in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers.

So, what would be happening is, that probably every few hours, the shift would change. There were four soldiers, two on either side of Peter.

[ 7 : 01 ] But they were chained to Peter. Peter was in chains. And the chain on one hand, it would be like handcuffs, but chained to the soldier on this side, and then chained to the soldier on that side.

So, Peter couldn't go anywhere. He was stuck. And if he wanted to move up, the soldiers would have to move. If the soldier wanted to go somewhere, the other soldier would have to go as well, and Peter would have to get up as well.

And then there were two soldiers standing guard at the doors. So, you would say to yourself, if anybody was ever going to not be able to get out of a place, it was Peter.

And then, after a wee while, they would change the shift, and other soldiers would come in, and they would take over from the other force. So, there were 16 soldiers, four at a time, taking shifts.

And you might say to yourself, why was Herod doing the like of that? Why was there all this guarding needed? Well, Herod knew that, if you go back to chapter 5, the disciples had been put in prison before for preaching.

[ 8 : 14 ] And there were no guards as such, but when they went in the morning to get them, they were gone. And how? Because an angel had let them out. And again, we find that there was, remember, when Jesus was put into the grave, a big stone was rolled over, and guards were put at the grave, because Jesus had kept saying he was going to rise from the dead.

And the leaders were saying, you know, wouldn't it be awful if his disciples came and stole his body? So, they put soldiers guarding the grave. But angels came, there was an earthquake, you remember the story?

Angels came, stone was taken away, Jesus rose from the dead, and the soldiers legged it. They were terrified in the presence of the angels. So, this time, Herod was taking no chances.

And he says, I am going to make so sure that Peter cannot get out of prison. He's going to be chained between soldiers, guards at the door. It is impossible for Peter to get out.

And that's how we find it, except it tells us in verse 5. So, here is Peter, kept in prison, but earnest prayer. That's really desperate prayer.

[ 9 : 34 ] It's the kind of prayer where you're, you know, if you really want something, really, really, really, really want something. Sometimes you'll go on and on and on asking, won't you?

Oh, please, I need this. I really have to have this. Please, please, please, please, please.

Something you really want. Well, that's the kind of prayer that they were praying. It was just really begging that the Lord would help Peter.

And so, we find here's Peter in prison, but the church is praying. I love that. Prayer, of course, is speaking to God.

And therefore, we have to have faith. Now, the Bible tells us one or two things about this. The first thing when we pray is that we must believe that God is.

There's no point in going to pray to God and saying, well, I don't really believe in God, but I'll pray anyway. That doesn't make sense. The Bible, this is what the Bible says, that everyone that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who really seek him.

[10:47] That's what it tells us. So, the first thing is we have to believe that God is. The second thing we've got to believe is that God is able. He might not answer our prayer, but we have to believe that he's able to answer the prayer.

Because sometimes what we pray for, God realizes that wouldn't be good for us. Or sometimes his plans are different to our plans. And we've got to realize that.

But often, God will answer our prayer in the way that we want. Or he will answer our prayer, maybe not in the way that we want, but he'll still answer it.

So, it's very important to realize that not only that God is, but that he is able. Because you've got to remember that the God is the God of the Bible, who, remember, he brought everything into being. Just by speaking. He spoke. Just spoke. And everything came. The world that we're living in. The earth, the seas, the trees, the mountains, the birds, the animals, the fish, the sun, the moon, the stars.

[12:04] God said, let there be. And there was. So, this is the God that we come to. But we've also got to remember, when we come to him, that he is a God who loves this world.

And by loving the world, he loves the people in the world. And this is what he says. It says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. You know that verse?

That whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. So, again, this is what we've got to believe. And the other thing we have to believe is that God hears our prayer and he answers it.

And God tells us that we are to come to him with everything. You know, sometimes you may say to yourself, I wonder if God will really bother with me because I've lost my pencil and I really need it. You might be in school or you might be, it might be something that's, oh. And you say to yourself, oh, this is too wee to bother God with. No, it's not. There is nothing too wee to bother God with.

[13:11] Maybe there's somebody, maybe there's somebody bullying you at school. Maybe, maybe there are difficult things. Ask God to help you.

It's very, very important that we, that's what it tells us. In everything, every single thing, we're told to bring it to God in prayer.

I've told the story two or three times before. And I used to use it as another person who was in it.

But it was actually me as a wee boy and my next door neighbor when we lived in Portree.

A girl was Vera. And we were coming home one night. We'd been out playing. And she wore glasses. I've told this story before. But it's, it's, when we were, there was, I don't know what, how we were, what we're playing.

But it had, it had got dark and we're coming home for tea. And we're coming, we had to climb over a fence and we were nearby. And Vera said, oh no, I've lost my glasses. And I can't remember, we don't know exactly where.

[14:15] And we thought, oh no. And she said, I am going to be in so much trouble. Because this has happened before. And this is my new pair. And I was told that I was not on any account to break them or to lose them.

And of course we went back and it was, it was dark. Nearly pitch black. It wasn't quite, quite, but very near. And we're looking in the grass and oh, it wasn't a sign of anything.

And then I, I just prayed to the Lord. I was a young boy. And I said, Lord, help us to find the glasses. And just after I did that, we heard this cat meowing.

And I've told this before. And it was meowing and meowing. And all of a sudden we kind of forgot the glasses. And we thought, oh, listen to that cat. Is there something wrong with the cat?

So we went in the direction of where the cat was. And there was a cat sitting in the grass. So we could hardly just see it because it was dark. And I went down because both of us always had cats.

[15:20] My mother was daft on cats. Always had cats. And I went down to stroke the cat. And when I stroked all the way down, my hand hit something. And it was the glasses lying in the grass.

I've never, ever, ever, and no wonder, forgotten. I was just young at the time. And that was God hearing. Because when I prayed, I didn't go through this in my mind thing, saying to myself, is God

real?

I believed God was real. I didn't go through in my mind thing, I wonder if he's able or not. I knew he was able. And I knew that he hears and he answers prayer.

Maybe he wouldn't answer, but I knew he could. And he did. And so that is so important. Well, that's how the church was then. They knew that the Lord could answer prayer.

And here we find Peter. It tells us in verse 6. Now when Herod was about to bring him out, the night before.

[16:20] So the next day, Herod was going to take Peter out. He was going to take him in front of all the people and do exactly what he did to James. He was going to execute him. He was going to kill him. So the night before, how do we find Peter?

We find him sleeping between two soldiers. Here he is in the prison. And tomorrow, how would you be if you were in prison? And you're chained to two soldiers.

And the word is, tomorrow morning, the prison door is going to be opened. And you're going to be taken out. And you're going to be killed. Would you be sleeping?

I don't think I'd be sleeping. I would be so worried. I'd be so, so nervous. But Peter is sound asleep. I wonder how he managed to go to sleep like that. Well, I think Peter went to sleep. Because he believed the words of Jesus.

[17:22] And before Jesus rose or ascended finally into heaven, he spoke to Peter one day down on the shores of Galilee.

And Peter, Jesus said to Peter, when you're old, Peter, you're going to get the martyr's crown. You will die as a martyr. That's really what he said. You can read all about it in John chapter 21. And Peter believed that.

These are the words of Jesus. Now, Peter, this was only about a month or a couple of months back when Jesus had said this. Or just a very short time.

So, Peter knew that although Herod had said, tomorrow, Peter, you die. Peter was saying to him, no, I'm not going to die.

[18:19] I don't know what's going to happen. But I know I'm not going to die. Because Jesus said that when I would be old, that's when I was going to die. And I'm not old yet.

So I'm not going to die. And so he slept really, really soundly. Now, that is faith. Where we believe God's word above everything else.

That God's word, doesn't matter what other things are happening. That we believe God's word over against everything else. And so, here's Peter.

He believed the words of Jesus. Jesus. And I would ask you, do you have that kind of faith? Because it's very, very important. Here we see the result now.

We're just going to look at it. Of the church praying. And prayer is so important. Prayer opened the Red Sea for the people of Israel to pass over. Prayer brought bread from heaven.

[19:20] Prayer brought fire from heaven. Prayer even raised the dead. It's incredible what God has done in answer to prayer. Prayer. So anyway, here we find, and the church is praying.

And God is about to work. And God sends an angel. Angels are heavenly messengers. They are around the throne of God. And we're told in the Bible that they minister, that they come to those who are, the word it says, heirs of salvation.

Those who are the Lord's and those who are going to be the Lord's. They're specially sent by God. And you and I have no idea how often an angel may have helped us.

An angel may have protected us. God may have sent an angel to protect you. We don't know when these things happen. But they do, because they're messengers.

Well, here was an angel sent by God. And this angel came into the prison to deliver Peter. And we can see how sound asleep Peter was, because the first thing that happened, a light shone in the prison.

[20:32] This was the angel coming in. Now, I don't know if the angel had light in and of itself. The angel is a spirit. But being in the presence of God would have made that angel shine.

You remember Moses, when Moses spent a long time up on the mountain in the presence of God. Do you know when he came down, his face was shining so much that he had to put a veil over his face.

The people of Israel couldn't look at him. Because something of the shining glory of God had come onto Moses. And so here is this angel, this is a light, has come on in the prison.

And has to poke, pokes Peter awake, wake up Peter. And something amazing happened. The chains just fell off his hand.

And everything is happening so silently. And the prison door opens. And out they go. So silently. And then they go past the other guards.

[ 21 : 39 ] Everything quietly. And then they come to the great big door. It opens of its own. And out they go. Into the street. You know, this last part of the chapter is full of surprises.

And the first big surprise is Peter gets a surprise. Because you know when all this was happening. You know what Peter thought. Peter thought it was a dream. He didn't realize this is real.

Until the angel left him. And he was out on the street. And maybe it was the cold air of the morning. Or whatever. Early through the night. He woke.

He came to. Well, it wasn't he woke. It was real. But he thought he was dreaming. And then all of a sudden he said. Whoa. This is real. I'm out on the street.

Oh, there's the. Wow. And he said. God has sent his angel. And he set me free. So that was the first surprise. Then the second surprise is.

[ 22 : 44 ] Peter made his way straight away to this house. Where he knew that everybody gathered together. And he knew they would be praying for him. And so he goes to the outer door. And he knocks on the door. And he keeps knocking.

And this girl. Rhoda comes to the door. And of course. They were worried. Because at this time. Soldiers were. Capturing people. And taking them away.

If they loved Jesus. So she would have asked. Who is there? And he said. Peter. It's me. Peter. You open the door. And she recognized his voice.

It is Peter. And she was so excited. Rather than open the door. She ran straight back in. And she said to all the people. Who were gathered there. Praying for Peter. Peter shut the door.

And they thought. They said to her. That. She had gone mad. That's. They didn't believe her. That's really what they're saying. You are out.

[ 23 : 44 ] Verse 15. They said to her. You are out of your mind. But she said. No. It's Peter. You know. It's actually. If you were looking in. It's quite a funny.

Picture. Because here's the church. And they're praying. Oh Lord. Let Peter go. And Rhoda say. Peter shut the door. He's been let go.

And they're saying. Oh no. No. No. No. You're out of your mind. Lord. Let Peter go. And that's what's happening. They're praying. But they're not believing.

The answer to their prayer. They had the faith. To believe. But I wonder. Did they have. Yes. They knew that God was able. But I was. I kind of think. There was a wee bit of doubt.

As well. Saying. God is able. But. I don't know. I don't know. Well. God showed. Yes. I can. And there he was.

[ 24 : 41 ] And of course. Then they opened the door. And. Wow. Amazing. But that wasn't the only shock. There's still another shock. Can you imagine the shock in the morning.

When the soldiers waken. And they look. And they turn over. Huh. There's no Peter. And you can see the one looking at the other. And say.

They also would probably be thinking they were dreaming. No. They were thinking they're having a nightmare. Because. In those days. To lose a prisoner. You.

If a prisoner was to die. And you lost that prisoner. You would die. A really scary thing. And so they're looking. And there's no sign of Peter.

And they're shouting to the sentries outside. Peter's gone. And they're saying. They can't. And of course. There's this. They're searching. No.

[ 25 : 38 ] No Peter. So. It's amazing. This is God at work. It's an amazing story. But you know. It doesn't quite finish there.

Because. At the end. We find. You know this. You can't fight against God. And there are people who try to fight against God.

But you know they can't. Because God. Will always win. And here's this man. Herod. Who was a wicked man. And he says.

I'm going to get rid of God's people. Kill James. He had killed others as well. And now he was going to kill Peter. Who was the leader of the church. Peter is back preaching.

And what happens to Herod? An angel. God sent an angel. To kill him. I wonder if it was the same angel that let Peter go.

[ 26 : 36 ] We don't know. But. Herod. Who was so mighty and strong at the beginning. Is dead at the end. You cannot.

Fight. Against God. But God. Delivers. His people. It's a wonderful story. And it just shows us how. I hope we take on board some of the lessons that we learned. And the important thing is to remember. As I was saying earlier on. We have to believe that God is.

We have to believe. That he is able to. We have to believe that he hears. And he answers our prayer. And we have to believe that God so loved the world.

That he gave his only begotten son. I hope that you today will say. Right. I have a choice to make. Do I want King Jesus.

[ 27 : 33 ] To be king. In my life. Well I'm sure you do. Well what do you do? You ask him. Lord. Come.

Into. My life. Help me. To believe in you. And to follow you. Let us pray. Oh Lord. Our God. We. Again give you thanks for. All your goodness to us. We give thanks for being able to. Remember the way. The wonderful things. That you've done.

We pray to. Bless our campaigners here. And we give thanks for. Every single one of them. And bless their own homes. And families. Oh Lord. Watch over us.

And we pray to. Bless the cup of tea. And coffee. In the hall afterwards. And we ask Lord. That you will. Be our leader. And our guide. Watch over us. Remember the.

[ 28 : 28 ] Study conference. Going on just now. Down in. In Harris. We pray for. Reverend James McKeever. As he speaks here. And pray that. You will bless him. And that.

His word. Will be a blessing. To all who gather. Watch over us. We pray. And do us good. And take away our sin. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to finish singing. In Psalm 23.

And it's from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. The 23rd Psalm.

We're going to sing. The whole psalm. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23.

Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. Psalm 23. And it's on page 28. The Lord is my shepherd. No one shall I know. He makes me lie down. Where the green pastures grow.

[ 29 : 26 ] He leads me to rest. Where the calm waters flow. My wandering steps. He brings back to his way. In straight paths of righteousness. Making me stay. This he has done.

His great name to display. Though I walk in death's valley. Where darkness is near. This is how it was for Peter. Though I. Because he was in death's valley.

Though I walk in death's valley. Where darkness is near. Because you are with me. No evil I'll fear. That's why he was able to sleep. Your rod and your staff.

Bring me comfort and cheer. Psalm 23. The whole psalm. The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

No one shall I know. He leads me to rest.

[ 30 : 28 ] Where the calm waters flow. My wandering steps. He brings back to his way.

In straight paths of righteousness. Making me stay. And this he has done.

This great name to display. The white woman's body. Though I walk in death's valley. Where darkness is near.

Because you are with me. No evil I'll fear. Your rod and your staff.

Bring me comfort and cheer. And the sight of my enemies. At table you spread.

[ 31 : 35 ] The eye of rejoicing. You pour on my head. My cup of earth flows.

And I'm gracious. And I'm gracious. We pay. So surely your covenant. Mercy and grace.

Will follow me closely. In all of my ways. I will dwell in the hearts.

Of the Lord all my days. 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.